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ABSTRACT

The state of the art of language testing in England is examined through the conference proceedings presented in this text. The nine chapters, written by individual authors, include discussion of the General Certificate of Education examinations, nonschool examinations, oral tests, research by examining boards, continuous assessment, and examinations in English as a foreign language. Appendixes contain information on current research in Britain, a select bibliography, and a list of conference participants. (RL)

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CILT Reports and Papers 4

# Examining Modern Languages

Abridged proceedings of a conference
held at State House, London WC1R 4TN
on 19th and 20th March 1970

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August, 1970
Centre for Information on Language Teaching
*for*
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# *Introductory Note*

This was the fourth conference to be convened by CILT on behalf of the Committee on Research and Development in Modern Languages. Like others, it brought together a number of experts to discuss a subject of immediate interest to language teachers. It aimed to survey and clarify opinion about existing language examinations and possibly to indicate topics on which research might be useful.

In some form, examinations affect almost all language teaching and most teachers have strong views about their influence or efficiency. Only limited aspects of the field could be discussed in the time available: these aspects included GCE and CSE examinations, certain non-school examinations, examinations in English as a foreign language and the use of objective techniques and continuous assessment. University level examinations were not specifically considered.

The following chapters include revised and edited versions of papers presented, a postscript arising from one session (Chapter 8), and a summary of the main opinions in the discussions (Chapter 9). The opinions expressed in the papers are of course those of their individual authors. Appendices provide a note of relevant research known to be current in Britain, a select bibliography and a list of the participants.

G. E. Perren
*Director,*
*Centre for Information*
*on Language Teaching*

# *Examining bodies referred to and abbreviations used in the text*

*Boards examining for the General Certificate of Education (GCE)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Associated Examining Board | AEB |
| University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate | Cambridge |
| Joint Matriculation Board (The Universities of Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield) | JMB |
| University Entrance and Schools Examinations Council, University of London | London |
| Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examinations Board | O & C |
| Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations | Oxford |
| Southern Universities' Joint Board for School Examinations (Universities of Bath, Bristol, Exeter, Reading, Southampton and Surrey) | SUJB |
| Welsh Joint Education Committee | WJEC |
| Northern Ireland General Certificate of Education Committee | Northern Ireland |

*Regional examining boards for Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Metropolitan | East Anglian Northern | Associated Lancashire |
| Middlesex | East Anglian Southern | North |
| South-East | East Midlands | North Western |
| Southern | West Midlands | Welsh |
| South Western | | West Yorkshire and Lindsey |
| | | Yorkshire |

*Other examining bodies*

| | |
|---|---|
| Institute of Linguists | |
| London Chamber of Commerce | LCC |
| Royal Society of Arts | RSA |
| Trinity College of Music, London | TCM |

CHAPTER 1

# *The influence of GCE examinations on teaching modern languages*

## *(1) 'O' level*

B. W. PAGE

We all know, of course, that examinations should not influence teaching methods at all. We, the teachers, should aim at teaching our subject to the highest level of competence our individual pupils can attain and external public examinations should arrive as an incidental, objective assessment of that attainment. We all know, equally well, that this is not true. Probably the most undesirable result of the wholly justified democratisation of education over the past twenty-five years has been the enormous importance assumed by examination results. In a society increasingly open to all the talents, where people are to be selected for higher education, the civil service, banking, insurance or what you will, readily available criteria will be used and public examination results will provide them. Whatever our aims in teaching a 'foreign' language—some competence in understanding, speaking and reading, some awareness of French culture, a feeling of foreignness, of the validity of a different view of life—one of our aims is undoubtedly to get our pupils through 'O' level. To that end we study the examination, we try to see precisely what the examiners are testing, we even draw up syllabuses based on past examination papers ('no need to teach the subjunctive—it never comes up') and we teach accordingly. Some embrace this situation with enthusiasm, others less wholeheartedly, but we all feel that whatever our private opinion of the examination, our duty towards our pupils is to prepare them for it to the best of our ability.

The traditional 'O' level examination[1] of composition, translation from and into the language, and possibly some sort of reading or aural comprehension

[1] I mention French only in this paper. There is very little difference in the treatment of other modern languages by the examination boards

test or reproduction, tries to give something to both the reformers who insist that in order to learn French you must use French, and the traditionalists who insist that, for French to have any educational justification, pupils must show that they know it by being able to translate (particularly into French) and show their intellectual paces thereby.

The oral part of this examination generally consists of a reading test and a few minutes' conversation prompted by some elementary questions on age, weather and the reading passage. Over the past six years, various boards have produced alternative examinations which do away with translation into French or make it an optional alternative to a reproduction or comprehension test[1].

The traditional examination, however, which is still taken by far the largest number of candidates[2], tests translation above all else. The normal Joint Matriculation Board French 'O' level[3], taken by over 36,000 candidates, may serve as a typical example. In it, 45 per cent of the marks are given for writing English and another 20 per cent for translating from English. Twelve per cent are given for reading or writing given French (dictation and reading passage). Only 23 per cent are given for individual written and spoken expression in the language.

Translation, then, and particularly translation into French because it is the most difficult, is dominant. In vain experts tell us that an oral approach, even in these conditions, is nevertheless the most effective. We do not dare to believe this because in the experience of most of us it is not true. We teach our pupils to respond in structured situations like this :

C'est toi qui as donné le ballon à Jean-Paul?
Oui, je le lui ai donné
or : Non, c'est Michel qui le lui a donné etc.

We can sometimes get this sort of phrase used spontaneously in an unstructured situation—certainly we hope to. But this is no guarantee at all that the same pupil faced with the English :

I gave it to him
or even worse :
I gave him it

will get the answer right. The situation is quite different; the pronoun *le* is no longer referring back to a previously mentioned *le ballon* nor *lui* to *à Jean-Paul.*

[1] *See* Note I, p. 14
[2] *See* Note II, p. 14
[3] *See* Note III, p. 15

The pupil now has to make a quite different set of connections between *it* and *le* and *him* and *lui* and all this has to be taught. Hence the fiendishly ingenious sentences we concoct :

Why did he give some of it to them there?

which bear no relation to real live communication any more than do many language laboratory drills.

Most boards go to considerable trouble to involve teachers in the formulation of their examinations so that it may be claimed that tests reflect the methods of teaching rather than distort them. Whether they reflect or distort is a chicken and egg problem and depends on the individual teacher. If he is a traditionalist, the normal 'O' level reflects his teaching; if he is not, it distorts it. However, public examinations have tended to reflect the more conservative methods and the new alternative 'O' levels result from discontent over the years of a growing minority who want to use different methods. Nevertheless, the traditional examination has not had by any means a totally stifling effect. All the audio-visual, audio-lingual, language laboratory courses and methods of the past ten years have been initiated under its domination and most have had to justify themselves according to its criteria[1]. But these experiments have been carried out by enthusiastic teachers who were willing to take a risk with their pupils; many who are sympathetic to new methods have not embarked upon them, and upon the often large capital investment involved, purely because there was, until recently, no suitable examination at the end of the course.

The alternative papers now set by several examination boards vary but all have the same characteristic of abolishing translation from English and of placing more emphasis on speaking or reading. The JMB 'O' level French (Alternative Syllabus)[2], which is very similar to the Cambridge Alternative B, goes furthest in this direction. In it only 10 per cent of marks are given for work in English, 30 per cent for passive comprehension, 25 per cent for semi-directed use of French (answers in French to given questions) and 30 per cent to individual expression in the language. This new examination presents us with a new set of criteria to satisfy. The arguments of those 'who are prepared to make some concession to what they feel vaguely to be a modern view and who declare that they use the "direct method" in the first year but are then compelled by the requirements of the public examinations to "get down to work", the implica-

[1] *See* S. R. Ingram and J. C. Mace, 'Audio-visual French—further experience'. *Modern Languages,* vol. XLIV, 1963, for how the first classes started on an audio-visual course were expected to perform at 'O' level

[2] *See* Note IV, p. 15

tion being that what was being done in the first year was not really work and that grammar and translation alone are work'[1] can no longer stand. French spoken and written without recourse to English is now required. 'The aim of this syllabus is to evaluate attainment in speaking and writing French and in comprehending its spoken and written form, reducing to a minimum the role of English'[2]. What used to be considered 'frills' are now 'real work', i.e. what the examiners want. Candidates must read a large amount of varied material, must hear a large number of different native voices and must have an immense amount of individual practice in speaking—65 per cent of the marks are given for the use of these skills. Moreover, 25 per cent go to individual spoken response —different for each of the thirty or so members of a class. Time must also be found for normal practice in writing. How can such skills be taught, tested, guaranteed accurate and yet retain some individual spontaneity? We have all experimented with beginners in French. We all know how delightfully primary school children can go through their dialogues, how even up to their second and third year in secondary school, children can retain some skill in conversing in French even when they have given up conversing in English. But most of us have not until now tried to make every single member of a fifth form able to converse in French for five full minutes, knowing that his performance will count for a quarter of his total marks.

All this needs a fundamentally different approach. A method in which a traditional course book is followed year by year with little or no use of a tape recorder, and only the occasional additional reader, will not prepare candidates for this examination. We are no longer in the position of having to make the difficult transition to an examination-based book-course after two or three years of oral method. We can go on using the techniques already often used in the first two years without the nagging feeling that the skills we are teaching are going to be largely irrelevant to the examination. Group work which progresses through the years from conversation drills on specific points or directed dialogues to a more genuine free exchange of ideas and views on topics and books being studied, is now directly relevant to a major part of the examination. Almost anything can feed this group in its later stages : the pupils' own everyday experiences, last Saturday's match, the books they are reading in French or English, a topic or project they are engaged upon, news of their French correspondents and the making of tapes to send to their French contacts. All this can be the subject of question and answer and discussion in small groups of four or five. Class libraries of readers covering as large an area

[1] F. M. Hodgson, *Learning modern languages*. Routledge, 1955, p.7
[2] Preamble to the regulations for the Alternative Syllabus in 'O' level French, JMB

of interest as possible should provide individual reading and the basis for much written work, if work sheets consisting of questionnaires, some contextualised drills and directions for summaries, reproductions and guided compositions accompany them.

*Conversation (a)*

The 'hundred questions' technique has been subjected to much criticism. It is a laudable attempt to chart an area of the examination in advance. A hundred questions on all sorts of subjects are set and are prepared for during the course of the year. In the examination ten are chosen at random for each candidate, who is expected to answer without hesitation or need for much reflection. This has been criticised as too mechanical a test involving too much rote-learning, but it can be as mechanical or not as the teacher or candidate wishes. The questions (some of which could be improved) cover a great deal of ground and can be the basis of much conversation practice in groups or with the whole class. Since they ingeniously involve a good variety of tenses they are invaluable for provoking meaningful pattern practice in verb forms and tense usage.

*Conversation (b)*

This has to be a real conversation and not a memorised lecture. Five minutes seems a long time to the prospective candidate but, in practice, he usually has little difficulty in filling it. The transition in group or class work from stereotyped drills, dialogues and role-playing to freer exchange is very difficult to make but has to be made if the language is to become a genuine means of communication. This test obliges teacher and pupils to make the effort. It has been argued that too much reliance on predetermined conversation material can in fact hamper the subsequent leap to independent communication. If this is true, the test will encourage us to wean our pupils from drills.

The use of an audio-visual course and graded taped material improves listening comprehension quite dramatically. It is entirely appropriate that the examination should encourage this by giving it a substantial number of marks, and it is not surprising that the examiners have found this test to be well done.

The abolition of translation has produced a distinct improvement in the authenticity of written French. Anglicisms still occur but the habit of thinking it all out in English first is dying.

Fluency in all the skills of hearing, speaking, reading and writing is much improved by the training imposed by this examination. But mistakes still abound and the old conflict between fluency and accuracy has been intensified rather than resolved. Discovery methods, 'working it out for oneself', are not generally relevant to modern language teaching. We cannot afford to let our pupils acquire *approximately* correct linguistic habits even if they can communicate adequately with them. We are always having to make the difficult judgement of when to interrupt the flow in order to correct the grammar.

The examination is by no means perfect yet and there are several ways in which it could be rapidly and easily improved. Above all, the board should accept the responsibility it undoubtedly has in influencing what is done in the classroom. The new JMB syllabus does not merely evaluate attainment; it encourages certain skills in a quite specific way and it should not avoid the ensuing responsibility. This lies in two main areas :

(1) *Accuracy:* The word occurs again and again in the regulations and it is assessed and marked in all the forms of written and spoken expression but nowhere is it defined. When the members of a committee of the Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters were revising *The Teaching of Modern Languages* in 1967, they wrote to all the examination boards to ask their views on the list of grammatical *tolérances* published by the Ministère de l'Instruction Publique in 1901 and gave a list of those alternatives they considered valid today. Only three of the boards replied and they presented such divergent views that nothing could be decided. If the limits of tolerance on points of grammar are so fluid, how much more so are they in pronunciation, accent, intonation, fluency and other interdependent qualities, all of which are judged and marked in this examination. Such published scales for assessing taped examinations as exist[1] are scarcely helpful. Each quality described as markable—*anglicised, laboured, inconsistent, uncertain, fairly accurate*—is purely subjective. How are we to know that our views are the same as the examiners'? The answer seems simple enough. After a given examination a sample half dozen written compositions should be photo-copied with a commentary on how the marks were awarded. For conversation and reading test a similar sample of tapes should be made. All these would be available to any teacher who wanted to find out to just what standards he was supposed to be working.

[1] Otter, H. S., 'An oral proficiency assessment chart'. *Modern Languages,* vol. XLVI no. 4, December 1965

(2) *Linguistic content:* This point has been made many times before, but if there is a difference between 'O' level French and 'A' level French, it should be more closely defined. The new 'Nuffield' examinations, where 75 per cent of the linguistic material will have appeared in the course itself, go some way towards this. The boards setting new examinations must define the linguistic areas in which we are supposed to be working.

Some details of the new JMB examination could be improved. Reading a passage aloud seems a highly artificial activity. If reading aloud is necessary, I should like to see a printed dialogue of which the examiner reads one part and the candidate the other. This would fit in much better with the give and take of modern methods.

The composition could be modified. The pictures are sometimes tiresomely facetious and the boards should perhaps suggest different styles in which the story could be retold: a policeman's report, a journalist's account for his paper, a television newsreel interview with one of the participants or the incident recounted as part of a play or novel.

The examination should include some work done during the course of the year. What can be done on a particular day is by no means necessarily one's best performance and some pieces of class work done at different stages would help to shorten the odds against the nervous, borderline candidate who is peculiarly vulnerable. The new alternative 'A' level offered by the JMB for 1972 includes an element of this sort and it could profitably be included at 'O' level also.

One other important skill has never been tested by examination boards —fast reading. Most teaching of modern languages, even using new methods, is still so concerned with grammatical accuracy that, although much more reading is done than before, there is no pressing need for the pupils to progress beyond the stage of slow subvocalisation or even mental translation when reading. If a test were included which involved the reading and comprehension of passages of French too long to translate within the time available, the acquisition of a valuable skill would be encouraged.

One cannot, however, expect a single examination to do everything. The JMB Alternative 'O' level in French and the Cambridge Alternative B, more revolutionary in conception and execution than the minor alterations practised by some other boards, already do much. There is, however, room for still more alternatives to provide relevant objectives.

## NOTE I

*Alternatives to translation into French offered in 1970*

| | |
|---|---|
| *AEB:* | Written comprehension test with French questions requiring answers in French; larger conversation. |
| **Cambridge:* | *Alternative B:* A second free composition; a much enlarged oral/aural test (as for JMB Alternative). *Alternative C:* Written comprehension test with French questions requiring answers in French; a more difficult dictation. |
| *JMB:* | Written comprehension test with French questions requiring answers in French; a much enlarged oral/aural test (see Note IV). |
| *London:* | Written comprehension test with French questions requiring answers in French. |
| *Oxford:* | Aural comprehension test requiring written answers in French. |
| *O & C:* | Free composition from pictures; larger conversation. |
| *SUJB:* | Reproduction of a spoken story of 230 to 250 words. |

* In 1971 Cambridge is combining its alternatives into one syllabus so that various choices of test can be made. The translation into French will be an alternative to a second free composition.

## NOTE II

*Numbers of candidates (where available), Summer 1969*

1. Candidates offering translation into French:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Cambridge* ... ... ... ... ... ... | 15,627 |
| *JMB* ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 36,406 |
| *London* ... ... ... ... ... ... | 28,783* |
| *Oxford* ... ... ... ... ... ... | 21,921 |
| *O & C* ... ... ... ... ... ... | 10,642 |
| *WJEC* ... ... ... ... ... ... | 6,575 |

*Summer 1968. 1969 figures not yet available.

2. Candidates offering alternatives to translation into French :

| | |
|---|---|
| *AEB* ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 8,886 |
| *Cambridge* ... ... ... ... ... ... | 4,635 |
| *JMB* ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 5,687 |
| *Oxford* ... ... ... ... ... ... | 2,876 |

3. Percentages offering translation or alternatives in boards supplying both :

| | *Translation* | *Alternative* |
|---|---|---|
| *Cambridge* ... ... ... ... ... | 77 | 23 |
| *JMB* ... ... ... ... ... ... | 86.5 | 13.5 |
| *Oxford* ... ... ... ... ... | 88.4 | 11.6 |

NOTE III

*JMB 'O' level French Syllabus (traditional form)* — *Allocation of Marks*

*Paper 1:*

1. Translation from English ... ... ... ... 20%
2. Free composition—a story based on a given set of pictures or outline; or a letter ... ... 16.6%

*Dictation* ... ... ... ... ... ... 8.3%

*Paper 2:*

1. Two passages for translation from French ... 30%
2. Reading comprehension test : written English questions requiring answers in English ... 8.6%

*Aural Comprehension test:* Written English questions requiring answers in English ... ... 6.6%

*Oral Examination:*

1. Reading Test ... ... ... ... ... 3.3%
2. Conversation ... ... ... ... ... 6.6%

NOTE IV

*JMB 'O' level French (Alternative Syllabus)* — *Allocation of Marks*

*Paper 1:*

1. Free composition : exactly similar to the traditional form ... ... ... ... ... 15%
2. Reading comprehension test : written French questions requiring answers in French ... 15%

*Paper 2:*

1. Listening comprehension test : a three-part listening test on tape lasting thirty minutes with multiple choice answers.

*Part i:* the candidate hears a remark and has to choose who the speaker is or where he is.
*Part ii:* the candidate hears a series of connected remarks or questions on a theme and has to choose appropriate answers or comments.
*Part iii:* two short incidents are related and the candidate chooses appropriate statements of fact about them ... ... ... ... 15%

2. Reading comprehension test: a two-part test with multiple choice answers.
*Part i:* a series of single sentence statements about a person in a given situation. The candidate chooses what is likely to be said.
*Part ii:* four prose passages on various subjects are given; the candidate chooses statements of fact about them ... ... ... ... 15%
3. Translation from French (the first of the two passages on the traditional paper) ... ... 10%

*Oral Examination:*

1. Reading Test ... ... ... ... ... 5%
2. *Conversation (a):* the candidate prepares beforehand the answers to a hundred given questions on a variety of topics. Ten are chosen at random in the examination room for the candidate to answer ... ... ... ... 10%
*Conversation (b):* the candidate converses with the examiner on two books chosen at random from three prepared or on one topic chosen from four prepared ... ... ... ... 15%

## *(2) 'A' level*

W. M. SHORTT

*Composition of sixth forms taking modern languages*

Today's problem is not so much one of increased numbers but of the lack of homogeneity of the sixth form. Pupils choose sixth form courses for the following reasons (not necessarily in this order of importance): in the junior and middle school, sympathetic teaching and/or the individual personality of a teacher have created an interest and liking for more advanced work; certain

subjects offer special interest and satisfaction; post 'O' and CSE level education with, perhaps, a further qualification, may lead to a rewarding career.

Thus a foreign language sixth form today, particularly in some well-established urban comprehensive schools, could consist of the following clearly defined groups:

(1) Pupils with good 'O' level grades, probably going on to university or similar institutions, who can cope with and derive benefit from the existing 'A' level examination.

(2) Pupils with indifferent/poor 'O' level grades, but who still wish to continue their foreign language, using it possibly as a third subject supporting their other two 'A' levels. This group needs a revised syllabus and a new examination. The proposed minor examination (Schools Council Working Paper 5) would have been very suitable.

It is interesting to note that, commenting on the proposals to establish GCE in 1951, the Cambridge and O & C boards regretted the passing of the Higher School Certificate Subsidiary Level (as do many of the older teachers). The steady rise in popularity of the 'O' ('A') subjects which these boards offer for examination at a level between 'A' and 'O' level indicates the need for this type of examination. It is a pity that passes at this level are recognised as being only 'O' level.

(3) Post—CSE pupils, interested in the life and customs of a foreign country but with no firm skill in the written language and with varying degrees of competence in speaking it. Their command of the printed word will be passive rather than active.

(4) Pupils beginning a foreign language and needing intensive preparation. For these, 'O' level is hardly sophisticated enough and existing 'A' level plainly will not do.

Even if groups 1–3 are arranged in sets according to ability (not always possible because of subject grouping) they still face the same examination at the end of their course: an examination based almost exclusively on active use of the foreign language with literary studies added, and whose scope and form have remained remarkably stable throughout a period of great educational change and upheaval.

### *Nature of 'A' level*

Whatever one considers 'A' level to be—a leaving examination to test

work done in language and literature, or a device for passing information on to universities about their prospective entrants—this examination determines not only the nature of a sixth form course, but also the significance attached to different elements of the course. Good teaching techniques are not necessarily synonymous with good examining techniques, but in practice the majority of teachers do teach to this examination. Taking into account the difficulties faced by candidates applying for the Arts faculties of universities, they cannot do otherwise. The percentages conventionally awarded to the middle range, grades B to D in particular, are so tightly grouped that borderlines become all important. B, C, C would probably secure for a candidate a place at the university of his choice, whilst B, C, D may well not. Moreover, many boards have 'hurdles' in various sections of their examination: e.g. in French, London, Northern Ireland, SUJB and Oxford impose hurdles on the language papers and to these Northern Ireland and SUJB add the oral test. AEB and O & C require a minimum performance in the prose and essay. Whatever is adopted—i.e. the imposing of hurdles or the allocation of marks to give a balancing or weighting effect —this will inevitably be reflected in the emphasis which a teacher gives to the different elements in his course.

*Translation into the foreign language*

In recent times, prose translation has had to withstand fairly sustained attacks. These can be summarised in the argument that it is of doubtful value as a means of learning a foreign language and preparing for it wastes much valuable time that could be better spent in building up experience. In spite of these criticisms, I hold the view that it is a valid test for the university aspirant to undergo, but with the proviso that the passage can be safely rendered into the foreign language, avoids undue sophistication of idiom, literary or highly-coloured vocabulary and is within the pupil's experience.

The following examples of what is considered inappropriate are taken from recent JMB papers for translation into Spanish:

(1) '. . . . . or a beggar, stopping at house after house, who raised his voice at each *reja,* the wrought iron gate that led into the *patio,* and begged for alms with the phrase of immemorial usage.'
(2) 'She had the black hair of the true Gypsy and an insolent terrible manner as though driving prisoners to their execution, and I should have written 'criminals', for the instincts of such a creature were surely upon the side of crime.'
(3) 'Go on and read a book all full of love affairs with the beautiful shiny black princesses.'
(4) 'The warmth of the sun fell on us like a treasure, and the daylight moved over the sea in great, slow transpositions of colour, dyeing each night in purple dusks. The cliffs soaked up the sunsets like red sponges and the distant mountains shone blue as a gigantic saw.'

It is true that during the first year of the 'A' level course training pupils in prose translation is often a rather tedious affair. But after two terms at the outside, it need not take up more than one period per ten days, and then purely for the purpose of correcting. Any teacher who gives prose lessons regularly over two years is simply wasting his own and his pupils' time.

*Translation into English*

Too frequently this turns out to be a literary, stylistic exercise. Here, possibly more than anywhere else in the 'A' level examination, are the traditional university approach and influence apparent. The candidate is faced with passages of admirably descriptive writing—'the storm', 'a fishing village', 'a rural scene', 'a harbour scene and village'—are representative titles of some of the passages set in Spanish by the JMB over the last decade. (How refreshingly different was the passage of 1968 about Berlin, written in a good, journalistic style!) I much prefer my pupils to have to deal with a piece of French of this sort :

> 'Quarante pour cent des étudiants français font un travail rémunéré chaque année. C'est n'importe quoi. Tout est bon. L'essentiel est que ça rapporte des sous, évidemment. Par exemple, à trois heures du matin on enfile une blouse à la gare de Vaugirard et on prend à pleins bras cinquante poules plumées et vidées qui viennent d'arriver des quatre coins de la Bretagne. Et on les charge sur un camion. Le camion plein, on monte dans la cabine et on démarre. C'est beau, Paris, dans le petit matin. Arrivé aux Halles, on décharge le camion. Puis on repart pour la gare de Vaugirard et ça recommence. Il ne faut pas fléchir : on se ferait remplacer par les 'vrais' porteurs. On fait ça pour dix francs la nuit. Parfois on a le droit à un casse-croûte en supplément : Camembert, pain, un quart de vin. Après ça, en rentrant, il faut plonger le nez dans les bouquins et les cours. Bien sûr, il y a des besognes moins rudes : servir de témoin à un procès ; faire le quatrième dans un tournoi de bridge ; promener des enfants l'après-midi. Mais c'est l'exceptionnel.' (*AEB, November 1967*)

For them, at their level, it is much more authentic than this :

> 'Rien n'est plus délicieux que ces premières journées d'automne où l'air agité de puissants remous semble une mer invisible dont les vagues se brisent dans les arbres, tandis que le soleil, dominant cette fureur et ce tumulte, accorde à la moindre fleur l'ombre qu'elle fera tourner à son pied jusqu'au soir.' (*JMB, 1967*)

*Essay*

Here we are faced with ambiguity, imprecision of purpose or aim. On the one hand, it is clear from many of the topics set that the essay is viewed in its tradional light—a piece of airy, entertaining nonsense, a didactic composition, or a discursive argument—with the assumption that the writer has at his disposal a wealth of vocabulary and a command of stylistic idiom. Yet, on the other hand, GCE boards (though not all), allocate substantially more marks

to form than to content, thus indicating what they hold to be more important, i.e. correct use of the foreign language.

Now the average sixth form pupil finds his command of the foreign language hardly adequate to do himself justice in this test. The distance separating his achievement in his own language from what he can realise in the foreign language is very great indeed—far greater than it was at 'O' level in fact. In these circumstances, the teacher's counsel is one of caution and adventurous ideas may be sacrificed to pedestrian, though correct, writing. What could be an interesting exercise for the pupil turns out to be a very dull affair indeed. I doubt whether the quality of much essay work at 'A' level is such as to consider the essay a serious alternative to prose composition. I should like to see this vaguely conceived exercise replaced by clearly defined areas or limited situations, where the terms of reference are laid down, where boundaries of language are prescribed. The AEB shows some concern for this problem of limitation of linguistic field. The regulations governing the new 'A' level syllabus state that 'the linguistic fields covered by the essay subjects will have some bearing on the areas of knowledge contained in the topics or the prescribed texts of Paper III'. This is a welcome move away from those essay topics that are too fanciful or sophisticated, as, e.g. :

'Vivir es convivir o no es nada' (Jorge Guillén)
Las ventajas de la lluvia
El valor de la amistad
Les bienfaits de la pauvreté
'La tempérance et le travail sont les deux vrais médecins de l'homme'
Les dangers de la routine
Warum lachen wir
Freundschaft
Traum und Phantasie

### *Literature / Civilisation*

A teacher is probably at his best when he is teaching what he enjoys and what he believes in. It is in Paper III where he will find this freedom to operate and it is right that this should be so. With the laudable intention of getting away from the syllabus traditionally dominated by 'classical' literature, the AEB has introduced a 'civilisation' topic coupled with twentieth century texts. I can appreciate the reasons that prompt this innovation : much valuable time is lost in the process of interpreting classical vocabulary and syntax; reading contemporary and non-literary texts could have a beneficial effect upon the pupil's work in the foreign language; in short, a syllabus of this nature has more relevance. Nevertheless, I view this development with some concern, for it has merely exchanged one set of limitations for another. What seems to me

a much better arrangement, and one which will be to the benefit of sixth form courses, is the introduction in 1972 by the JMB of an alternative Paper III in French dealing with twentieth century texts, civilisation and a dissertation prepared in advance. Brief details of prescribed works are as follows :

> 'Candidates will be required to answer three questions, one question from each of Section 1 and 2 together with one other to be chosen from either Section 1 or Section 3. They will also be required to submit a dissertation in English on a topic of their own choice.'
>
> *Section 1*
>
> 1. Camus, l'Etranger
> 2. Dhôtel, l'Ile aux oiseaux de fer
> 3. Duhamel, Confession de minuit
> 4. Ionesco, Le roi se meurt
> 5. Prévert, La pluie et le beau temps
> 6. Saint Exupéry, Vol de nuit
>
> *Section 2*
>
> 7. Cousteau, Le monde du silence
> 8. de Gaulle, Mémoires de guerre, Vol. III (excluding La Victoire and documents)
> 9. J. Guyard, Le miracle français
> 10. Mendès France, Pour une république moderne, Collection Idées, Gallimard
> 11. Salacrou, Boulevard Durand
> 12. Weil, La condition ouvrière, Collection Idées, Gallimard
>
> *Section 3*
>
> 13. Molière, Le misanthrope
> 14. Balzac, Eugénie Grandet
> 15. Anatole France, Les dieux ont soif

I understand from the JMB that during the preparation of the syllabus over the past few years, there has been a good response from teachers' organisations for suggestions of texts which would be appropriate to this new paper. The London board, too, is developing a paper similar in character. This, I am sure, is the right direction in which to be moving : towards widening the scope of the examination, thus giving the teacher the freedom to choose the syllabus most suitable to himself and the conditions under which he has to work.

What seems to me to be the greatest problem with Paper III is the paucity of reward in relation to the amount of work done. Many teachers feel that the sheer toil involved ought to merit a much higher return. At the moment, preparation for Paper III takes on the nature of cramming with all that this implies in the use of bad teaching techniques.

### *Oral test*

Ideally it is very desirable to increase the percentage awarded to this test. This would, no doubt, have a positive, beneficial effect on teaching. But

until a test is devised that is susceptible of greater control than at present, merely increasing the proportion of oral marks would make nonsense of 'A' level gradings. Criteria of linguistic achievement—what is desirable as a level of performance and in what area of language—are at the moment so vague that I am content to accept the existing mark allocation. What I should like to see is the oral test standing in its own right, divorced from the written examination and given its own grading.

*Postscript*

If 'A' level is a leaving examination, then it is right that it should emphasise linguistic proficiency. On the other hand, universities (the long-established ones, at least) look for evidence of powers of literary appreciation. Whatever the role one ascribes to 'A' level, the fact is that at the moment it cannot satisfactorily accommodate the various groups, with their differing backgrounds and inclinations, which are now a feature of our sixth forms. Some pupils have to be completely left out of examination reckoning; others spend two years desperately trying to cope with a scheme of work and never really mastering it, because conditions that brought about the 'A' level examination have now changed and because, in my view the most cogent reason, insufficient thought has been given to defining clearly the area in which a pupil is asked to display his proficiency.

In the absence of a clear definition of objectives in linguistic terms, measuring proficiency at 'A' level is very difficult. Performance is often implicitly compared with the native speaker, yet only a small number of those who study a foreign language can achieve anything like the equivalent mastery in all the areas of language available to the native speaker.

In an effort to cater for the differing sixth form groups, it will probably be necessary to divide the 'A' level examination into self-contained sectors or items. A candidate could then offer a combination of these appropriate to his attainment, inclination and requirements. Using existing methods of assessment would no doubt pose problems, but a combination of modes 1 and 3 might offer a satisfactory solution.

The drawback to learning a foreign language and being tested in it, using traditional methods, is that the pupil is all the time sandwiched between huge slices of English and progress cannot always be seen to be made. The sixth form is a suitable place to experiment with block or intensive periods of teaching, particularly when a new language is begun from scratch. But that is quite another problem.

## NOTE

*'A' level French: recent syllabuses*

| BOARD | LANGUAGE | LITERATURE | ORAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| AEB | 1 Prose & Essay (31.25%)<br>1 Translation plus<br>1 Summary in English of a longer passage of French (25%) | A: 3 prescribed topics of 'Civilisation'<br>B: 7 (20 texts with some social significance and loosely related to section A)<br>5 questions: 1 from A & 4 from B<br>or<br>2 from A & 3 from B<br>(25%) | Oral Reading & Conversation (no Dictation) (18.75%) |
| Cambridge | 1 Prose & Essay (27%)<br>2 Translations (27%) | A: 17, 18, 19, 20th century texts for detailed study.<br>B: 18, 19, 20th century texts for less detailed study.<br>C: History, Institutions, Civilisation.<br>2 questions from A and 2 from any other section.<br>(27%) | Dictation, Reading & Conversation (19%) |
| JMB | 1 Prose & Essay (32.5%)<br>2 Translations (27.5%) | A: 17, 18, 19, 20th century texts for detailed study.<br>B: 20th century texts for less detailed study.<br>4 questions from A or 3 from A plus 2 from B.<br>(25%) | Dictation, Reading & Conversation (15%) |
| London | 2 Proses & 1 Essay (33.3%)<br>2 Translations (16.7%) | A: 17, 18th century texts.<br>B: 19th century texts.<br>C: 19, 20th century texts.<br>5 questions, at least one from each section.<br>(33.3%) | Dictation, Reading & Conversation (16.7%) |

| BOARD | LANGUAGE | LITERATURE | ORAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| Oxford | 1 Prose & Essay (29.5%)<br>2 Translations (23.5%) | A: Voltaire (1969) Maupassant (1970) + 20th century texts.<br>B: 17, 18, 19, 20th century texts.<br>C: General reading based on A & B books.<br>4 questions—1 from A, 1 from B, and 2 from A, B or C. (29.5%) | Dictation, Reading & Conversation (17.6%) |
| O & C | 1 Prose & Essay (28.6%)<br>2 Translations (28.6%) | 12 texts, 17, 18, 19, 20th century.<br>4 commentaries from 4 different texts plus 2 essays from 2 different set books. (28.6%) | Dictation, Reading & Conversation (14.3%) |
| SUJB | 1 Prose & Essay (33.3%) | A: La Fontaine plus Molière or Racine (1969)<br>B: 19, 20th century texts. All for detailed study.<br>C: 17, 19, 20th century texts for less detailed study.<br>6 questions: 1 compulsory and 1 other in A, 2 from B and 2 from C. (30%) | Dictation, Reading & Conversation (20%) |
| WJEC | 1 Prose & Essay (33.3%)<br>2 Translations (16.7%) | A: 17, 18, 19, 20th century texts for detailed study.<br>B: 2 books for background study of Civilisation.<br>5 questions: all from A or 4 from A and 1 from B. (33.3%) | Dictation, Reading & Conversation (16.7%) |

CHAPTER 2

# *CSE Mode III examinations in modern languages*

A. P. DYSON

'Effective teacher control of syllabus content, examination papers and examining techniques is the rock on which the CSE system will stand.' This was one of the basic principles outlined in Examinations Bulletin 1[1]. By their constitutions the CSE examining boards are obliged to offer a range of examination facilities to suit the particular needs of schools in their area so that this teacher control can indeed be effective. These needs have been catered for until now by the provision of three modes of examining.

In Mode I, the boards publish syllabuses devised by their subject panels of teachers, provide examination papers drawn up under the supervision of these panels, and mark and grade scripts again under the supervision of subject panels and grading committees whose members are teachers.

In Mode II, schools devise their own syllabus and the boards set and mark the examination, as in Mode I.

In Mode III, schools devise their own syllabus, assess the work of their pupils and suggest grades, in collaboration with a moderator responsible to the boards through their subject panels.

In view of the general principle quoted above, one would think that Mode III was the technique most suited to CSE examining, in that here teacher control is at a maximum. It is rather surprising to learn that 'The Mode III CSE examinations are taken by under 10 per cent of CSE schools at the moment'[2]. In the case of modern languages the percentage is even smaller. As will be seen from the table below, only three boards, West Yorkshire and Lindsey, East Midlands and East Anglian, make use of Mode III techniques to any considerable extent.

[1] *The Certificate of Secondary Education,* Secondary Schools Examinations Council: Examinations Bulletin 1, HMSO, 1963
[2] I. M. Connaughton, 'The validity of examinations at 16 plus'. *See* Appendix 2

This situation was forecast in Examinations Bulletin 1[1]; '. . . in some subjects there is a wide measure of agreement amongst teachers on the ground to be covered by the end of a five year secondary school course, and the possibility exists of devising examinations that can test the standard achieved, irrespective of the different groups of pupils . . . .' The Bulletin goes on to cite modern languages as an example of this type of subject.

When the Manchester University School of Education CSE research project began work in 1963, it was noticeable that the Modern Languages Panel was able to agree, on general principles, on what it wanted to test in the new examination more quickly than its colleagues in the Art, English and Mathematics Panels.

It is easy to see that Mode III techniques offer teachers great scope in some subjects, e.g. History, Geography, Art, Handicrafts especially. At first sight one might feel that since a language syllabus is more or less defined by the phonetic, lexical and structural content of the language itself, there is not a great deal of scope for variations in syllabuses which outline the attainment expected of pupils in their first five years of language study. In view of the problems inevitably posed by Mode III examining, discussed at length in Examinations Bulletin 5[2], one might conclude that Mode III syllabuses are hardly justified in modern languages. There are, however, a number of grounds on which schools might reasonably feel that a syllabus different from their local board's Mode I syllabus would be better suited to the needs of their pupils. (One must remember that schools cannot 'shop around' from board to board for CSE examinations as they can for GCE examinations.)

A school might feel, for example, that it did not agree with the relative importance allocated to the various language skills in the local Mode I syllabus, or that it did not like the testing techniques used in the board's examination (the form of the tests, for example, or the use of tape recorders).

Again a school might wish to include in its syllabus elements which did not form part of the Mode I syllabus, for example : background studies, project work, or set books. And a school might wish to use continuous assessment in grading its candidates.

A further case where Mode III examining might be appropriate is where a school feels that the Mode I syllabus is not suited to the level of attainment it could expect of its pupils. A school is free to submit a scheme of work which is notably less exacting than its board's Mode I syllabus.

[1] p. 5
[2] *See* Appendix 2

This is a case where Mode III examining has great potential. Syllabuses could be devised which would restrict demands on candidates to what they can cope with successfully : intensively, as regards range of tenses, vocabulary, structure studies; or extensively, as regards the range of language skills handled. Anyone who has marked CSE examination scripts will know that a substantial proportion of less able candidates perform so badly in free composition that one wonders if they have gained much from their years of practice of this skill. Perhaps it would have been better in many of these cases if the pupils had followed syllabuses in which this particular exercise had been replaced by something less demanding. Mode III syllabuses could be devised which would involve the use of only the oral/aural skills, or of only the listening/reading skills.

Naturally, where syllabuses are restricted in this way there will be a restriction of the range of grades which boards will award to describe the performance of candidates entered by the schools concerned. It seems a better principle to grade candidates by limiting the scope of examinations to material which they can cope with comfortably and grading them according to these limits, than to set a comprehensive examination which will grade candidates by the extent to which they are unsuccessful in coping with the examination as a whole.

It may be argued that this function of grading the examination rather than the candidate could be exercised more efficiently through Mode I procedures. An examination could be devised which would consist of a number of units of graded difficulty : candidates would receive their examination grade according to the number of units attempted in which they had attained a satisfactory level. There would be a 'cut off' point in each unit, with no attempt to grade within each unit. This would make the task of the examiner easier; it is difficult to devise test material in modern languages which discriminates evenly over the wide range of ability represented by the five CSE grades. But though this unit system might be theoretically possible in a Mode I examination, there are obviously considerable practical difficulties. The idea of a unit type examination in modern languages was being discussed in the early thirties when the Modern Language Association set up a research project to devise a translation-free examination, but no workable scheme for such a unit type examination was evolved[1]. It seems then that the idea of using graded test material can best be exploited through Mode III techniques and one would like to see more schools using Mode III facilities for this purpose.

[1] In *Modern Languages,* vol. 14 nos. 3 and 4, February 1933 and vol. 15 nos. 3 and 4 February 1934

Another situation in which Mode III techniques could be used to great advantage is where a school, or more likely a group of schools, wish to offer a syllabus which is tailored to suit a published course. Any school is free to offer such a syllabus but the first attempt to exploit the potentialities of Mode III in this respect on a group basis is being made by members of the Nuffield/ Schools Council Modern Languages Project at York.

The organisation of schools on a group basis appears to be the ideal method of exploiting Mode III techniques, as is pointed out in Examinations Bulletin 5[1]. One can see, however, that boards might be suspicious of anything which appeared to undermine their regional autonomy. They might feel that a Mode III syllabus organised on a national basis could do this. It is to be hoped that this difficulty can be surmounted. Such group Mode III examinations, organised under expert guidance, could provide an object lesson in the use of this under-exploited field of CSE work. On a national basis they might prove a useful point of common reference for the boards in ensuring parity of grading standards.

*Summing up*

We have seen that schools offering modern languages at CSE level make very little use of Mode III facilities. Yet Mode III gives schools the opportunity to design examinations to suit their own pupils, in terms of content and difficulty, and this latter possibility is particularly relevant when one considers that the ability range of pupils entered for CSE in modern languages is likely to be extended at the lower end of the scale in the next few years. It is to be hoped that the CSE boards will do more to extend the scope of Mode III examining by encouraging teachers to use the facilities that exist, by streamlining moderation procedures and by welcoming group Mode III schemes when they are proposed.

*See Note overleaf.*

[1] p.3

NOTE

*Table showing percentage of candidates in CSE Mode III French, 1969*

| *Name of board* | *Total candidates in French (all modes)* | *Percentage in Mode III* |
|---|---|---|
| W. Yorks and Lindsey | 3,267 | 38 |
| E. Midland ... ... | 3,344 | 23.8 |
| East Anglian ... ... | 5,234 | 21 |
| North Regional ... | 2,414 | 7 |
| Middlesex ... ... | 2,297 | 1.4 |
| S. Western ... ... | 4,461 | 1 |
| S. Regional ... ... | 4,049 | less than 1 |
| S.E. Regional ... ... | 3,654 | 0.1 |
| Associated Lancs Schools | 1,343 | None |
| N. Western ... ... | 4,842 | ,, |
| Yorks Regional ... | 2,349 | ,, |
| Welsh Joint Board ... | 1,350 | ,, |
| W. Midland ... ... | 5,158 | ,, |
| Metropolitan ... ... | 4,149 | ,, |

CHAPTER 3

# *Non-school examinations*

J. B. ADAM

There exist, outside the schools examinations system, examinations in languages set and administered by no fewer than five nationally known organisations—the Institute of Linguists, the London Chamber of Commerce, the Royal Society of Arts and Pitman's. In addition, the Joint Committee for National Awards in Business Studies provides for examinations in languages as part of its Ordinary and Higher National Diplomas in Business Studies.

It is, of course, true that very many language students who have left school and are continuing their education, either full-time or part-time, at colleges of further education, evening institutes, etc., also direct their study towards 'O' level and 'A' level GCE, with the aim of obtaining the necessary passes to proceed to a university, polytechnic, technical college or college of education. On the other hand, there are very many more whose interest in obtaining a language qualification is determined by occupational needs.

It is for the latter class of student that the examining bodies mentioned cater. Whereas school examinations tend to use material taken from more or less literary sources as the basis for examination questions, the non-school examinations in most cases make quite explicit that they seek their question material in 'economic, political, social, commercial and general scientific (topics) as found in good newspapers or journals' as well as in the 'geography, life and institutions of the country' (Institute of Linguists). The LCC in its written examinations relies on 'everyday life', 'everyday topics', 'commercial correspondence', 'commerce, industry and economics', excluding highly specialised and technical vocabulary. The Chamber also organises an oral examination: 'Foreign Languages for Industry and Commerce'. The RSA emphasises 'the institutions, way of life and current affairs in the country concerned' as well as matters of a 'general character bearing on industry and commerce or current affairs of the country concerned'. Language papers in the Ordinary and Higher

Diplomas in Business Studies have, of course, a strong bias towards economic, commercial and industrial content but also favour social problems and current affairs. Only Pitman's, of all the non-school examining bodies, makes no explicit statement as to the basis of its examination papers, but perhaps this may be taken for granted in view of the well-known association of Pitman's with commerce.

The recent, thorough-going review and revision of its examinations carried out for the Institute of Linguists provides a first class statement of the objectives and methods of approach which should characterise all non-school language examinations and which will undoubtedly extend their influence to the examinations of other bodies. It is made clear that the Institute's examinations are not intended to test knowledge *about* a language, or how much of a given syllabus a candidate has assimilated. They are proficiency tests—tests of the degree to which candidates can demonstrate their ability to apply their knowledge by performing certain tasks of verbal communication so devised as to be as realistic as possible. This particular approach is followed most closely by the oral examinations of the LCC (Foreign Languages for Industry and Commerce) and by the RSA (Certificate for Secretarial Linguists and Diploma for Bi-lingual Secretaries) as will be evident from the brief summary below.

Although the oral approach to language teaching has made considerable headway in the schools in recent years, this aspect has not yet received the weighting in GCE at either 'O' level or 'A' level which many would like to see. Already in the Institute of Linguists' various levels, in the RSA's Secretarial Linguist examinations and perhaps most of all in the LCC's 'Foreign Languages for Industry and Commerce' the oral test receives the emphasis it deserves. Here perhaps the single subject examinations of the LCC, RSA, Pitman's and to a great extent also the language papers of the National Diploma in Business Studies, lag somewhat behind, although the latter does allot 40 per cent of the total marks to the oral section.

It may be useful to take each of the examinations in turn and to indicate briefly special characteristics which distinguish them from others. At the same time, some estimate of comparative standards at different stages, where such a comparison is possible, may be of interest. The various stages of the Institute of Linguists and of GCE may serve as standards of reference of linguistic difficulty only.

*Institute of Linguists:*

The Preliminary Certificate tests elementary ability to understand the

spoken language and to speak it in conversation, to take part in situations and to show some general knowledge of the country. The Grade I Certificate in addition tests ability to read aloud, to write from dictation, to understand a written text, to write a translation into English of a foreign text and a free composition. Its linguistic standard is approximately equivalent to that of 'O' level. The Grade II Certificate, approaching 'A' level in linguistic difficulty, in addition to written translation both ways and a composition of 250 words on background subjects of the country concerned, has oral requirements of a prepared talk, conversation, written summary of foreign speech and sight translation both ways. The Intermediate Diploma is to be attempted only by prospective professional or semi-professional linguists and approaches the linguistic difficulty of a pass degree, while being more practically orientated. This examination introduces, among other things, *ad hoc* interpreting, i.e. a test of ability to act as an 'interpreter in a conversation on everyday business or social matters between an English person and a speaker of the foreign language'. An additional, optional, special subject paper is available involving the answering of two questions from five relating to commercial practice, transport and insurance, banking, librarianship, travel and tourism or other approved subjects. An oral test is also included. The Final Diploma is linguistically of honours degree standard and includes consecutive interpreting and the choice between an essay of about 1,500 words, specialised technical translation or general interpreting.

*National Diplomas in Business Studies:*

This is a grouped subject examination in which it is possible for one, or at most two of the five papers to be taken in a foreign language. Since at both the Ordinary Level (approximately equivalent to Grade II of the Institute of Linguists) and at Higher Level (approximately equivalent to the Institute of Linguists' Intermediate) these are the only language examinations in the non-school group which are not centrally set and marked, a unified pattern is difficult to discern, as might be expected.

Language papers are set by internal examiners in each college and are approved by assessors. Scripts are marked by internal examiners and reviewed by the assessors whose main task is to maintain reasonably uniform standards throughout the country. In spite of this apparent freedom to innovate and experiment, however, most examination papers take the form of written translation both ways and a composition. The oral test generally requires a written summary of a passage read aloud by the oral examiner, a dictation and a conversation with the oral examiner. The oral test, which counts for 40 per cent

of total marks, is administered by external examiners selected by the colleges and approved by the Joint Committee. Their competence and standards appear to vary considerably.

One noteworthy aspect of the business subject papers of the National Diplomas in Business Studies is that agreements have been reached between the Joint Committee and the main professional organisations such as the Chartered Institutes of Secretaries, of Cost and Works Accountants and others, whereby subject for subject exemption is granted to candidates who reach a certain standard in the National Diploma examinations. In view of the considerable progress being made by the Institute of Linguists towards becoming a fully professional body, the question arises whether it might not be advantageous to consider some similar form of exemption, in whole or in part, from the Institute's examinations to be granted to successful candidates taking languages in the Ordinary and Higher National Diploma examinations.

*The London Chamber of Commerce:*

The single subject examinations in languages are unremarkable but this is not true of the Chamber's 'Foreign Languages for Industry and Commerce'. Originally produced by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce in response to demands from industry, particularly in the Midlands, that a new oral examination was required, designed to test the ability of employees to carry out tasks in the spoken language at various levels with a strong emphasis on practical fluency, this examination is a departure in several ways from the traditional and is more akin to the oral sections of the Institute of Linguists' examinations. Pictures and photographs, previously prepared topics of personal interest, situations, recorded conversations and sight translations into English are used, as well as discussion in the language of the candidate's special expertise. In short, the examinations 'are designed to discover how much you know and not how much you do not know'.

*The Royal Society of Arts:*

Like those of the LCC, the RSA's single subject language examinations have few innovatory features. On the other hand, the new examinations for the Certificate for Secretarial Linguists and the Diploma for Bi-lingual Secretaries recently launched by the RSA, and corresponding approximately to the Intermediate and Final standards of the Institute of Linguists, show a bias towards economic and commercial material. As befits good secretaries, candidates are tested on their ability to compose letters and reports when given factual details,

to take down in and transcribe from foreign shorthand, to type letters ready for signature, to perform liaison interpreting between two businessmen. These are examinations of a high standard. On the other hand, many colleges already set internal examinations for bi-lingual secretaries and it is understood that the Institute of Linguists is now considering offering examinations along similar lines.

On the assumption that language examinations should test the candidate's ability to perform a practical task of communication in the foreign language, it would seem that an examination devised somewhat on the following lines might be appropriate for non-school candidates :

*Oral*

*Summarise a foreign text in English.* This skill might well be required of an employee in business and commerce in supplying the gist of short business letters, reports from abroad, newspaper articles or advertising copy.

*Interpret a conversation between an English and a foreign speaker.* Not all employers have retained anything from an 'O' level of twenty years ago.

*Translate at sight a foreign text into English.* e.g. short letters, reports and articles for the employer in a hurry.

*Converse in a foreign language with one person.* As when receiving foreign visitors, taking telephone calls, making business trips abroad.

*Converse in a practical situation.* Application obvious.

*Written*

*Summarise speech in a foreign language into English.* Requiring the ability to give the gist in writing of speeches at conferences, business meetings, to make notes of longer telephone calls.

*Summarise a foreign text into English.* A test of ability to give the gist of a longer letter, report or newspaper article.

*Translate a foreign text into English.* A test of ability to give an employer a translation of a letter, report, contract, or article from a periodical.

*Original composition in a foreign language.* To test ability to write a personal letter or short business acknowledgements.

Finally, can such a proliferation of different bodies responsible for non-school language examinations be justified? Would there not be economies to be

gained from rationalisation? The equivalence of standards of the various examinations is by no means as close as the rough approximations attempted in this paper would suggest. Would there not be much to be gained by standardisation under one or two bodies? The prospective employer has a fair idea of what 'O' level or 'A' level means. But what is to be made of Grade I Institute of Linguists, Intermediate LCC, Intermediate RSA, Intermediate Pitmans, to say nothing of Ordinary National Diploma in Business Studies? It is about time the non-school examinations bodies got together.

NOTE: I am indebted to Mr P. J. Locke and *The Incorporated Linguist* for suggesting the basis for the following comparative table which I have modified and extended to cover non-school examinations bodies

## COMPARATIVE TABLE

*Oral*

1. Summarise in French a speech in French
2. Summarise in English a text in French
3. Consecutively interpret in English a speech in French
4. Interpret a conversation between English and French speakers
5. Read a French text aloud
6. Translate at sight into English a French text
7. Translate at sight into French an English text
8. Converse in French with one person
9. Converse in French in a practical situation
10. Make a prepared speech in French (with/without notes)
11. Make an unprepared speech in French

*Written*

12. Answer questions in English on a speech in French
13. Answer questions in French on a speech in French
14. Answer questions in English on a text in French
15. Answer questions in French on a text in English
16. Answer questions in French on a text in French
17. Summarise in English a speech in French
18. Summarise in French a speech in French
19. Summarise in English a text in French
20. Summarise in French a text in English
21. Write from dictation
22. Translate into English a text in French
23. Translate into French a text in English
24. Demonstrate knowledge of the country
25. Write original composition in French on given theme, or in response to text or speech

| Institute of Linguists | | | | | Nat. Dipl. in Business Studies | | London Chamber of Commerce (Single Subject) | | | London Chamber of Commerce (Languages for Industry and Commerce) | | | RSA (Single Subject) | | | RSA Bi-lingual Secretarial | | Pitman Examination Institute | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Prel. | I | II | Inter. | Final | Ord. | Higher | Elem. | Inter | Adv. | Elem. | Inter | Adv. | Elem. | Inter | Adv. | Cert. | Dipl. | Elem. | Inter | Adv. |
| | | | | | | | | | | | X | | X | | | | | | | |
| | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | |
| | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | |
| | X | | | | | | | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | | | | |
| | | X | | | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | | | | |
| | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | | | |
| x | | | | | | | | | | x | | | x | | | x | | | | |
| | | x | | x | | | | | | x | x | x | x | | | | x | | | |
| x | x | | | | | | | | | x | x | | | | | | | | | |
| x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | x | x | x | |
| | x | | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| | x | x | | | x | x | | | | | | x | | | x | | | | x | x |
| | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | | | |
| | | | | x | | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | x | | | | x | x | | x | x | | | | x | | | | | | x | x |
| | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | | | x | x | x | x | | | |
| | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | | x | | x | x | x | | | |
| x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | | | | | | x | x | | | | | |
| | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |

CHAPTER 4

# *Oral examinations*

E. F. CHAPLEN

I propose to discuss two reasons why it might be preferable to obtain measurements of oral proficiency from the teachers of those being examined rather than by means of formal tests conducted by external examiners. I will concern myself mainly with the reliability of what are by now traditional methods of oral examination, and with their validity.

The traditional methods of oral examining borrow something of 'country-house' methods of selecting civil servants and service officers, and something of the methods of formal speech training and examining. Thus, the candidate may have to give a short talk on a topic presented to him ten or twenty minutes before to a small group of fellow examinees, then answer questions put to him by members of the group—possibly under the prompting of the examiner. Or he may have to discuss a visual stimulus with the examiner—a map, a painting, or a town plan, for example. Or he may have to read a set piece either to the examiner alone, or to a small group of fellow examinees. But whatever the exact form the test task takes, the examinee is placed in a situation which for the purpose of standardising and comparing performances is as highly controlled as possible. Then his performance is assessed on a closely defined scale of ability by one or more examiners.

From one point of view this appears to be a highly satisfactory type of examination : the candidate is being required to demonstrate the ability that most people would agree is exactly the one we wish to measure—his ability to communicate orally. Unfortunately, however, no matter how closely defined is the scale of ability against which his performance is measured, the measurement is made subjectively and is, in consequence, unreliable. Of course, this is not a sufficient reason in itself to condemn the examination. Indeed, the only complete certainty in psychometrics is that any measurement we obtain is in error. However, if the amount of error involved in oral examining is so great that little reliance can be placed on the great majority of decisions that one makes on the

basis of the examination results, there is little point in going to the expense and trouble of constructing and administering such tests.

The crucial point in the mark distribution of any examination is at the cut between pass and fail. If, as is very frequently the case, the cut is made at or about the mean, and if, as is also frequently the case, the great majority of scores cluster at or about this point, and if, as is also frequently the case, the reliability of the examination does not exceed 0.850, then the likelihood is that about 40 per cent of the candidates' scores will fall within the area of gross error at or about the cutting point. That is to say, there is a 10 per cent or greater chance that the true score of each of the 20 per cent of candidates whose obtained scores cluster immediately above the mean falls below the mean, and a 10 per cent or greater chance that the true score of each of the 20 per cent of the candidates whose obtained scores cluster immediately below the mean falls above it.

In order to give some indication of the proportion of scores one might expect to fall within the area of extreme error about the cutting point in the score distribution of an examination, two types of data are necessary; first, the score distributions themselves, and secondly, reliability coefficients for the grading procedure. In the report of the experiment in oral examining conducted by the Southern Regional Examinations Board in 1964[1], we can find everything we need except the score distributions. However, the smallness of the standard deviations obtained in the experiment, and the fact that the total possible range of marks was employed in only one of the four sub-tests, strongly suggest that a large proportion of the candidates were placed in the area of gross error about the mean.

TABLE I

*Reliability coefficients in oral examining taken from Schools Council Examinations Bulletin 11, p. 19*

| METHOD | Examiner v Observer | Examiner v Assessor | Examiner + Observer v Assessor | Observer v Assessor | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Reading* | — | — | .664 | — | 90 |
| *Topic* | .837 | .674 | — | .591 | 89 |
| *Visual Stimulus* | .877 | .739 | — | .686 | 99 |
| *Group Discussion* | .785 | — | — | — | 103 |

[1] Schools Council Examinations Bulletin II. *See* Appendix 2

NOTES :
For the reading method the examiner and observer produced an agreed mark. Consequently, no reliability coefficient is available. The two people concerned reported very close agreement and no difficulty in coming to an agreed mark.
For the group discussion method it was impossible to assess from the tape recordings.
Examiner : the person in charge of the method.
Observer : the person taking no part in the experiment but sitting unobtrusively at the back of the room.
Assessor : the person assessing from the tape recordings.

TABLE II

*Means, standard deviations, and effective range of the reliability data reported in Table I Bulletin 11, p. 23*

| METHOD | | MEAN | S.D. | RANGE | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Reading* | Examiner +Observer | 6.1 | 1.87 | 1-10 | 90 |
| | Assessor | 5.5 | 2.44 | 1-10 | |
| *Topic* | Examiner | 6.3 | 1.37 | 3-9 | |
| | Observer | 6.2 | 1.41 | 3-9 | 89 |
| | Assessor | 5.6 | 2.39 | 1-10 | |
| *Visual Stimulus* | Examiner | 6.5 | 1.47 | 2-10 | |
| | Observer | 6.4 | 1.58 | 3-10 | 99 |
| | Assessor | 5.4 | 2.28 | 1-10 | |
| *Group Discussion* | Examiner | 5.6 | 1.96 | 1-9 | |
| | Observer | 5.9 | 2.29 | 1-10 | 103 |
| | Assessor | — | — | — | |

Since it seemed unlikely that the score distributions for the SREB experiment would be easily accessible, application was made to the Joint Matriculation Board for permission to make use of the score sheets for the Optional Oral Paper in the General Studies (Advanced) examination administered in 1969, and this the board was generous enough to grant.

Unfortunately, the reliability data that exist for this administration of the JMB Oral Test are based on samples ranging in size from seven candidates to thirteen, and it was felt that these were too small to justify even tentative conclusions. For this reason it was decided to make use of the reliability data obtained during the SREB experiment. Although the forms of oral test used by the SREB in this experiment differ in certain respects from those employed by

the JMB, and although the two populations being tested were different, the task of the examiners was the same in each case ; both teams of examiners had to rank the candidates on a ten-point scale of competence in oral communication. And it is the reliability with which this task can be carried out that we are most interested in at this point.

One further liberty was taken with the reliability data for the SREB experiment. In this experiment a different examiner administered each of the sub-tests to a different group of pupils. It was therefore impossible to determine experimentally the reliability of the entire battery. In the JMB Test, on the other hand, we are in possession of the marks awarded to each candidate on each of two sub-tests, and it was felt that it would be of interest to see how the increase of reliability that results from doubling the test length affected the proportion of candidates' grades falling in the area of gross error about the mean. It was decided, therefore, to hypothesise a total-test marker reliability of 0.850. The full details of the reliability coefficients assumed for the sub-tests in the JMB Oral Test are set out in Table III below.

TABLE III

*Assumed reliability coefficients for the sub-tests in the Joint Matriculation Board's optional oral test in English*

| METHOD | RELIABILITY COEFFICIENT |
|---|---|
| 1. *Talking to a given topic* | 0.837 |
| 2. *Conversation with another examinee on a given topic* | 0.785 |
| 3. *Reading a set piece* | 0.664 |
| 4. *Total test* (i.e. 1 + 2 or 2 + 3) | 0.850 |

In all, two moderators and twelve examiners were involved in administering the JMB Oral Test to about 1,600 candidates. For the purpose of this investigation the score sheets of four examiners were selected, one of the examiners having had eleven years' experience with the test, one having had more than five years' experience, one with one year's previous experience, and one who was newly appointed in 1969. All, together with the other examiners concerned, had attended a full day's standardising meeting during which about a dozen pupils representative of the sample of the population being examined were tested, and the performances and results discussed.

On the basis of the assumed reliability coefficients set out in Table III, the standard error of each of the sub-tests marked by each of the four examiners selected for this investigation was computed. Next, ogives of the relative cumulative frequencies for each sub-test marked by each examiner were con-

structed. Then, assuming that the cut between pass and fail was made at the score point closest to the mean, the 20 per cent, the 10 per cent, and the 2 per cent confidence limits of that score point were calculated, and the proportions of candidates falling within these limits read off from the ogives.

The results of this investigation of the mark distributions of the four JMB oral examiners on the basis of the assumed reliability coefficients set out in Table III show that if these coefficients are realistic estimates, between 36 per cent and 59 per cent of the candidates fell in the area of gross error about the score point closest to the mean in the case of a single test of oral proficiency, and that in the case of a double test, between 36 per cent and 45 per cent did so. Furthermore, if one works to the 5 per cent level of confidence, one can be reasonably certain of the pass/fail categorisation of between 38 per cent and 54 per cent of the candidates in the case of a single test, and between 43 per cent and 52 per cent in the case of the summed results of two sub-tests.

The conclusions we have drawn from the results of this investigation are necessarily tentative. We have taken raw-score data from the sub-tests in one form of oral examination and to them applied reliability data from the sub-tests in another. In addition, we have assumed a reliability for the entire test on the basis of reasoning and not experiment. But if it is agreed that the examiner-reliability coefficients which have been employed are realistic estimates, then we suggest that the conclusions we have drawn from this pilot investigation justify the setting up of a fully controlled experiment in order to confirm or disaffirm them. For if one can be reasonably certain about the pass/fail categorisation on the basis of their performance in an oral examination of only about 50 per cent or fewer of the candidates, there would be very little to lose and, in the opinion of many, a great deal to gain, from turning to teachers for assessments of oral proficiency rather than to external examiners.

I would like to emphasise that although this investigation has been based on the results of the oral examination conducted by one particular examining board, the conclusions are by no means a reflection of the lack of competence of either the board or of the examiners concerned. As our examination of the standard deviations in Table II revealed, the same situation was probably present in the SREB experiment : such considerable bunching of scores about the mean that even a marker reliability of the order of 0.90 would only minimally relieve the situation. Furthermore, this state of affairs is to be expected in any examination that is subjectively marked and that consists essentially of five or fewer items.

So far I have been discussing only the reliability of marking a candidate's performance on a particular occasion. However, marker unreliability is only

TABLE IV

*The percentage of candidates falling in the 20%, the 10% and the 2% confidence limits of the score point nearest the mean mark obtained in the JMB optional oral paper, 1969, assuming the reliability coefficients set out in Table III*

| Examiner | 20% Confidence Limits | 10% Confidence Limits | 2% Confidence Limits | N | Mean | S.D. | Poss. Range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. TALKING TO A GIVEN TOPIC—Assumed reliability : 0.837 | | | | | | | |
| A | 39% | 49% | 65% | 48 | 6.06 | 1.86 | 1–10 |
| B | 36% | 46% | 63% | 53 | 6.76 | 1.66 | 1–10 |
| 2. CONVERSATION WITH ANOTHER EXAMINER ON A GIVEN TOPIC—Assumed reliability : 0.785 | | | | | | | |
| A | 42% | 55% | 74% | 108 | 5.26 | 1.40 | 1–10 |
| B | 53% | 65% | 82% | 109 | 6.49 | 1.70 | 1–10 |
| C | 44% | 54% | 70% | 147 | 6.18 | 1.13 | 1–10 |
| D | 46% | 57% | 70% | 97 | 6.65 | 1.36 | 1–10 |
| 3. READING A SET PIECE—Assumed reliability : 0.664 | | | | | | | |
| A | 59% | 65% | 80% | 108 | 5.80 | 1.93 | 1–10 |
| B | 55% | 66% | 80% | 109 | 5.92 | 1.42 | 1–10 |
| C | 59% | 72% | 83% | 147 | 6.11 | 1.69 | 1–10 |
| D | 53% | 63% | 77% | 97 | 6.47 | 1.34 | 1–10 |

TABLE IV (continued)

| Examiner | 20% Confidence Limits | 10% Confidence Limits | 2% Confidence Limits | N | Mean | S.D. | Poss. Range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. TOPIC PLUS CONVERSATION—Assumed reliability : 0.850 | | | | | | | |
| A | 45% | 57% | 75% | 48 | 11.73 | 3.05 | 1–20 |
| B | 36% | 48% | 66% | 53 | 13.68 | 3.03 | 1–20 |
| 5. CONVERSATION PLUS READING—Assumed reliability: 0.850 | | | | | | | |
| A | 43% | 52% | 67% | 108 | 11.06 | 3.02 | 1–20 |
| B | 39% | 51% | 64% | 109 | 12.41 | 2.22 | 1–20 |
| C | 43% | 52% | 70% | 147 | 12.29 | 2.65 | 1–20 |
| D | 39% | 48% | 62% | 97 | 13.12 | 2.54 | 1–20 |

one possible source of error, and it is at least arguable that in the case of oral examining, it is a less important source than that of candidate/examiner or candidate/fellow-examinee interaction. As the SREB report states[1],

> 'The most substantial obstacle to the conduct of a satisfactory [oral] examination is the attitude of the candidates towards the examiner. With unfamiliar and senior acquaintances, children tend to adopt a homogenous tone which is quiet and colourless, and which offers a funny mixture of shyness and respect. When it is compared with classroom experience it becomes clear that with the best intentions imaginable, the examiner may trail behind him a somewhat inhibiting atmosphere which remains an ineradicable part of any conversation. Between the ages of, say, twelve and seventeen, the children tend to assume a guarded, sometimes resentful, reticent attitude towards the adult world. This familiar social problem can be intensified by the atmosphere of an oral examination. Such reticence, and perhaps an attendant nervousness, even awe, before an unknown figure (however friendly) vested with influence and authority, could easily prevent the essential flow of sympathy between examiner and candidate, and the conversation would be halting and inept.'

[1] p.24

The extent of error that this factor introduces into the measurement obtained from a test conducted by an external examiner can never be known, but we may suspect that it is not inconsiderable. Certainly, its presence and effect lend strong support to the argument that in the case of oral examining the increase in validity to be gained from making use of teacher assessments instead of those made by an external examiner would more than compensate for any loss in comparability of results from school to school that might arise as the consequence.

CHAPTER 5

# *Research by examining boards*

H. S. OTTER

This must necessarily be a very brief survey of a very complex subject, and I shall refer only to the GCE boards. I shall give first an account of some of the operational research which is a consistent built-in aspect of our work and then of some of the specific post-examination research which is constantly taking place.

## *Reliability*

Reliability is often too easily thought of as scorer reliability. Whilst this is very important, the whole problem is exemplified very clearly by the broad field of the discussions at this conference, which have ranged from concern regarding the reliability of oral examiners—including self-consistency and co-ordination problems—to the extreme, where, with objectively scored tests we are concerned with the performance of the test itself—test/re-test reliability etc.—with some comment by the way on the more conventional mark schemes associated with traditional written papers. In all these areas it is very easy to drift if not fall into the fallacy of relevant objectivity. We have to be wary of mere counting and arithmetical conveniences. The tally counter introduced into some of our earlier experiments in oral examining can be very useful, but one has to be very sure of what one is counting and why, and that it is worthwhile. We have to be wary, in other words, of superficial reliability without validity. Reliability must always be subservient to validity.

## *Comparability*

Comparability, I take it, is a convenient expression for some broader aspects of reliability. It may be thought of as starting when there are two examiners. In general, we use it with reference to the pass standards or grades in *two or more* examinations which are operating at the same level in the same field and therefore may be assumed to be comparable, e.g. the pass in 'O' level English Language, the Grade C/B border in 'A' level Italian. There are, however, many

aspects of this comparability and it is a very complex question :

(1) *From year to year in the same subject in the same board.* Some of the factors contributing to this are the continuity of examiners and moderators, consistency of methods, availability of detailed statistics.

(2) *From one language to another in the same examination and the same board.* In consideration of this problem the Cambridge Syndicate has taken a cross-reference analysis of the performance of candidates taking two languages. Inferences from such an analysis are based on the hypothetical quality of the candidate as a linguist and there are many other imponderables, such as length and nature of course etc., but the figures for a large sample of candidates provide some useful information.

(3) *The same language in the same examination for different boards.* Investigations in this field, as I shall mention later, are undertaken from time to time.

It would be difficult to trace historically the developments of the collective consciousness of the boards; this was no doubt originally very much a matter of agreement of like minds and in a relatively small world, an academic and professional consensus.

From 1919 the Secondary Schools Examinations Council and later its successor, the Schools Council, have had general oversight of the work of the examining boards. The Schools Council Subject Committees have access to syllabuses, question papers, mark schemes and scripts. Comparability generally at 'A' level is the province of the Working Party on Advanced Level Comparability.

Before 1939 the School Certificate Examination of each board was scrutinised periodically by a team appointed by the SSEC. Since then this has lapsed and the boards have undertaken the responsibility of initiating a continuing series of investigations into different subjects. It is necessary to mention the field as a whole in order to keep the matter in perspective : any one modern language is only one of four or five commoner languages examined and only one of some thirty subjects at 'A' level and forty or fifty at 'O' level. (As I referred to 'four or five commoner languages' I should remind you that the problems do not stop there : at the Cambridge Syndicate we have recently been comparing the approach, style and standard of papers and examiners in Norwegian, Turkish and Russian.)

Each subject then must take its turn unless special circumstances intervene such as, for example, statistical anomalies or specific criticism. For modern

languages as for other subjects, detailed comparative statistics are prepared each year showing the number of candidates and the results according to categories of candidates based chiefly on the types of schools. A great deal of information of this nature provides a continuous check on discrepancies and anomalies which may at any time be the subject of further investigation.

It is interesting to note that there is general opinion, supported by research, that the problems of reliability in the marking of language papers are smaller than those of other subjects.

In the course of these definitions I have given some notion of the concern of the boards and of their formal responsibilities and some of their methods. I should like briefly to remind you of some of the built-in processes directed towards achieving maximum reliability. These include the provision and comparison of mark schemes, elaborate processes of co-ordination, the study of a wide range of statistics which involves the preparation and handling at each examination of a vast quantity of material and records, all of which amount to a considerable research project and do in fact fill volumes. There are also procedures of checking which are really a continuation and finalising of the co-ordination of marking. Subsequently there is routine post-examination analysis; details are usually reported to subject committees and to the School Examinations Committees and in annual reports on the examinations. Similarly, comparative statistics are studied by each board and discussed jointly where necessary.

One useful factor for the processes of comparability may be the use of common elements. These exist between some boards in the use of common objective comprehension tests in some of the alternative syllabuses which are now being taken by a large number of candidates.

Following a recent investigation conducted by a sub-committee of the Schools Council Modern Languages Committee further discussions between the boards have led to the experimental introduction of a common prose in the French examination at 'A' level in 1972. The Oxford Delegacy is co-ordinating the arrangements for this.

Investigations are carried out from time to time by various boards acting on behalf of and in agreement with other boards. It may be of interest to give some account of the recent investigation organised by the JMB, on the French 'O' level examination in 1969. Sample scripts from each board were marked by examiners of all the other boards in terms of their own standards and the Chief Examiners reported on the syllabuses, question papers, and mark schemes of each of the other boards. This resulted in seventy-two separate reports and a considerable amount of statistical data. Such an investigation aims at an assessment

of the total demands of the examinations and includes a great deal of judgement on matters not entirely susceptible of statistical evaluation. The real benefits of such enquiries can be summarised as follows :

(1) Each board receives a critical assessment of all the aspects of its own examination.

(2) Each board has samples of the content and method of other examinations for detailed consideration.

(3) The papers and meetings give an opportunity for discussion of the forms of the examination, notions of standards, weighting of parts of the syllabus etc. The report on this work will be circulated to all boards and will no doubt be sent to all their subject committees.

Anyone concerned with the examinations is at present aware of two conflicting tendencies : the first, a proper concern about absolute reliability and comparability; the second, a strong and understandable desire for freedom in the form and content of syllabuses. The latter leads to experiment and diversity in methods of examining, and this is obviously necessary to provide experience and continuous improvement; though often, exponents of change tend to think that their method is the final solution. But whilst we must experiment we must also realise that alternatives are bound to prejudice reliability.

Other chapters of this report mention the educational aspects of examinations. Although the subject of this paper is the reliability of the examinations, I mentioned at the outset that this cannot in practice be divorced from considerations of validity. The boards and their advisers, who are largely teachers directly involved with the examinations, are constantly concerned with the educational implications of their work. But the boards cannot separate their responsibilities; they are rightly expected to maintain reliability and continuity. They have to recognise genuine advances in educational modes and functions. They have to live with the problem of reconciling ideal reliability with educational ideals.

CHAPTER 6

# *The use and influence of objective tests*

W. E. PRESCOTT

An objective test is generally described as one in which the questions are set in such a way as to have only one correct answer. The term 'objective', therefore, refers to the marking procedure only. Devising the test remains subjective. The characteristic contribution of objective testing has been that it has made possible rapid reliable marking regardless of numbers. It follows from this that wherever such considerations are important it is valuable at least to consider the possibility of using objective tests.

## *The construction of objective tests*

Although objective tests are distinguishable from other forms of test by the complete reliability of marking, a number of other characteristics have come to be associated with their construction. These are worth recording here since they have undoubtedly had an influence on the formulation of objectives in language teaching and on testing generally.

(i) The major influence has been to shift interest away from an over-preoccupation with *marking* examinations to a consideration of the preparation of the examination itself. The essential first step in the construction of an objective test—as indeed in the construction of all tests—should be the detailed definition of objectives. Only when objectives have been clearly defined can one hope to discuss possible techniques of testing. Defining objectives in testable terms is, of course, extremely difficult, but it is the lack of just such a definition which makes discussion of 'O' level language examination techniques so difficult.

(ii) The definition of the teaching objectives is followed by detailed analysis of the precise content of the teaching programme. This is particularly important in the case of languages since only a limited selection from the language can normally be taught in schools, and

it is very important that the test constructor should have a reasonable indication of what this selection consists.

Objective tests try to sample as widely as possible from the course content, and in this they often differ very markedly from traditional examinations.

(iii) The analysis of objectives and course content is followed by the writing of test items. With objective tests this is generally accepted as being a group procedure and a number of specialists are asked to contribute questions. This procedure, it might be suggested, has a considerable advantage over the normal procedure adopted for conventional examinations where on the whole far less material is considered at the preparatory stage.

(iv) The try-out of the forms of the pre-test and the item analysis which follows go a long way towards ensuring that the test which is ultimately presented to pupils as a part of their examination will be reliable, will be of suitable difficulty, and will discriminate effectively over the ability range. The item analysis is, however, only one part of the validation process, and it is very important that the final form of the test should be carefully considered to ensure that it still reflects, in a balanced way, the aims of the course of instruction.

It would be very surprising if the effects of this careful preparation were not to be felt in other less objective parts of the examination.

*Value of using objective techniques in GCE and CSE examinations*

As mentioned earlier, before deciding on testing techniques, it is essential to clarify objectives. It then becomes apparent whether objective techniques can be validly used. The increase in reliability cannot be achieved at the expense of the validity of the test. But presuming that objective tests may be used, they do appear to offer a number of advantages at the GCE and CSE levels.

(i) Large numbers of pupils are involved.

(ii) It is desirable that the marking be completed as rapidly as possible since many decisions tend to depend on the results.

(iii) There is a need for reliable tests which may help examining boards in the difficult task of comparing pupils who are sitting similar examinations. In CSE there is the problem of comparing candidates following different modes, and in GCE the problem of candidates following Alternative Syllabuses or taking a similar examination with a different board. With both examinations there is the problem of

comparing pupil performance from one year to the next, and also the problem of comparing standards in the two examinations (especially Grade 1 Candidate CSE/GCE 'O' level pass candidates).

*Use of objective tests in language testing*

In addition to the advantages that objective techniques may offer to testing generally, the particular advantage they offer to language testing is that they enable comprehension to be tested without involving the pupil's ability to speak or write. This is of very great importance in those cases where the activities of listening and reading comprehension figure very prominently among the course objectives.

(i) *Testing comprehension*

A number of examining boards have introduced, or are considering introducing, objective techniques of testing in the field of listening and reading comprehension. Although these tests might well be considered an advance on previous examination procedures they have met with some criticism. It might be interesting to speculate on some of the reasons why some teachers are unhappy about their use :

(a) The specimen material which has been available has not always been of the highest quality—often rejected test items. There is a tendency for teachers to be so affected by the quality of the items in the specimen material that they are not able to appreciate the merits of the technique.

(b) A number of the examples of multiple-choice tests which have been available have led teachers to suspect that they involve an excessive degree of intelligence over and above a knowledge of the language.

(c) Many teachers are still not happy about the possibilities of guessing. This unease is often linked with a considerable degree of vagueness about the significance of test scores, means, standard deviations range etc.

(d) There is still a feeling of dissatisfaction with the listening comprehension tests which have so far been developed. Although these obviously involve a large measure of listening comprehension, the reading element is still present to a significant degree.

(e) Some teachers fear the possible 'backwash' effects of multiple-choice techniques.

These criticisms point to the need for more discussion of the particular techniques being used in the multiple-choice sections of the 'O' level examinations. There is a danger that the particular types of item which were taken from

American tests may be used to excess. The 'Who is speaking?' and 'Where are they?' types of item are probably more suitable for a standardised proficiency test than for continual use in annual examinations. The situational techniques used in the listening comprehension test might well be reviewed to see whether or not another technique could be found which involved less dependence on comprehension of the written options.

The question of intelligence is also an important one. With the agreement of the examining boards concerned, the Nuffield/Schools Council Project has arranged for the pre-test of GCE multiple-choice German and Spanish items on native speakers of the languages concerned. Classes of mixed ability of the appropriate age range have been asked to complete the tests to ensure that those items which appear to require qualities other than comprehension of the language are readily identified.

The likely backwash effect of multiple-choice is still hard to assess. Vernon offered the view that 'So long as the objective questions are reasonably straightforward and brief, we know that the amount of improvement brought about by coaching and practice is limited. . . . However, it is possible (though there is little direct evidence) that facility in coping with more complex items is more highly coachable and that pupils who receive practice at these may gain an undue advantage'[1]. One possible way of ensuring that the item types are straightforward and lacking in complexity might be to adopt the procedure often recommended in the construction of psychological tests—namely to construct the test first as an inventive-response test and then to use the incorrect answers as a guide to possible distractors.

(ii) *Testing written and oral production*

Some of the testing techniques often employed in examinations to test speaking and writing are of very doubtful reliability. The unstructured essay and the free conversation both require subjective judgements by examiners and are very difficult to mark consistently. Writing and speaking, however, both involve qualities which it is impossible to assess entirely objectively. The problem is therefore how to reduce the unreliability of the marking without destroying the validity of the test.

(a) *Writing*

The reliability of the test of writing may be improved in a number of ways: by increasing the number of questions, increasing

[1] *The Certificate of Secondary Education: An introduction to objective-type examinations*, Examinations Bulletin 4, Secondary Schools Examination Council, HMSO, 1964

the number of markers so that a form of multiple marking is employed, or using analytic marking schemes.

Can objective tests also play a part? The case for introducing the purely objective test rests on the assumption that writing involves a complex combination of skills which may to a certain extent be isolated and tested separately. Marking schemes for essays frequently acknowledge the many aspects of writing when they make provision for the separate assessment of such aspects as accuracy in the use of structure, use of vocabulary, spelling, etc. It can be argued that the essay is not the most efficient means of testing such features, since the examiner is dependent on what the pupil decides to produce in order to make his assessment. A more searching and planned assessment could almost certainly be made in a number of separate objective tests. The reason that such tests do not play a part in our examinations is the fear of their effect on teaching. The use of objective techniques alongside the more conventional essay type of question, however, would seem to merit further research and experiment. If accuracy were assessed by objective techniques only, and not in the essay, it would be interesting to see if this had any marked effect on the quality of the essays produced in examinations.

Although completely objective techniques do not yet appear in GCE or CSE tests of writing, a number of techniques are now being included which are capable of being marked with a high degree of inter-judge reliability. An example of one such technique is the use of a series of questions on pictures which is included in some CSE examinations, and will appear in some of the experimental 'O' level examinations for pupils testing the Nuffield/Schools Council materials. Such a technique appears to offer a number of advantages; it may be reliably scored, it may be used to sample a fairly wide area of the syllabus, and its effect on teaching is likely to be beneficial. As the pupils' mastery of the language increases so the need for such tests diminishes. There is certainly, however, a case for their use at the level of first examinations.

(b) *Speaking*

Testing the pupils' ability to speak the language is generally accepted as being the most difficult of all the language testing tasks. In addition to many problems faced in testing writing there are the problems of individual testing and the limited amount of time available for assessing each pupil.

Pimsleur has stated that the 'problem of objective testing of speaking ability has largely been overcome in recent years'[1]. By this he presumably means that it is possible to construct a test of speaking which can be marked with a high degree of reliability. Unfortunately there must remain a suspicion that this reliability may well be achieved at the expense of validity. Most published tests of speaking base their assessment on such a limited sample of the pupil's performance that it is hard to feel convinced that the tests are valid.

There does, however, seem to be a need for semi-objective tests in addition to the 'free conversation' which already exists in oral examinations. In the 'O' level examinations for Nuffield/Schools Council pupils questions on pictures, narration of events presented in a sequence of pictures, and role-playing have been introduced. All these techniques may be marked very reliably if a clearly defined rating scale is devised.

Another technique which some boards are currently employing is the 'hundred prepared questions'. An interesting aspect of the 'hundred prepared questions' is that it appears to mark a radical departure from the GCE boards' normal procedure of avoiding any indication as to the linguistic syllabus on which the examination is based. But it is unfortunate that in this case a decision about syllabus content appears to have been taken without first considering a detailed definition of the objectives for oral work. Had these objectives been clearly defined there would surely have been no need to list the actual hundred questions to be answered. It seems doubtful whether this will ultimately be in the best interests of oral teaching.

*Postscript*

One important effect of the introduction of objective testing has not yet been mentioned. The production of such tests is a lengthy and expensive business and a number of boards have recognised the desirability of co-operating in establishing an item bank. A recent report by the NFER[2] has shown the feasibility of producing an item bank for the use of CSE boards and teachers constructing their own Mode III examinations. It is reasonable to suppose that the degree of co-operation between examining boards will increase as the need is felt for more sophisticated and reliable testing procedures.

[1] Pimsleur, P., 'Testing foreign language learning'. In Valdman, A., editor, *Trends in language teaching*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1966, p.205

[2] Skurnik, L. S., *Item banking*, National Foundation for Educational Research, 1969

CHAPTER 7

# *The use and efficacy of continuous assessment*

B. G. PALMER

In proportion as dissatisfaction with traditional techniques of examining has grown, interest has increased in the contrasting technique of continuous assessment. Some six years ago, CSE became the first public examination in this country seriously to include teachers' assessments, although the colleges of education probably have the longest experience in the field. The latest manifestation of interest is contained in the *Proposals for the curriculum and examinations in the sixth form*[1] where it is stated that the new examination 'should allow appropriate combination of external and internal assessment, including the assessment of course work'.

## *Efficacy of continuous assessment*

The efficacy of a form of assessment (efficacy is more logically discussed before *use*) may be examined under two main headings:

(1) *Reliability*

Continuous assessment is necessarily subjective; examinations are potentially more reliable especially with 'objective' methods. The reliability of CA can be greatly increased by introducing other assessors to counter individual fluctuation and personality factors —by internal moderation. In public examinations, to ensure comparability of standards, external moderation is also necessary. Reliability is likely also to increase with the experience of the teacher in this form of assessment and with the length of period over which it takes place.

(2) *Validity*

In the most complete form of continuous assessment all elements of the course may be represented in the final result. This

[1] *See* Appendix 2

does not necessarily ensure a valid assessment. The teacher needs to define his objectives with some exactness and then to gauge what is being measured and in what proportions. Examinations set by responsible bodies are likely to be reasonably valid for their own *examination* syllabus, but may be much less so for individual teaching syllabuses.

*Advantages*

The major advantages of CA as opposed to examinations seem to be that it is flexible and can cater for individual differences in schools, teachers, children and syllabuses; that the pressure of work or 'assessment motivation' is spread evenly throughout the course and not related to the last few months or weeks. CA also avoids three inevitable disadvantages of syllabus-content examinations, and at least one other major potential disadvantage. It avoids arbitrary sampling since the whole syllabus can never be examined in the limited time of the examination; it avoids the intense psychological pressure created by examinations which is felt by a number of candidates (and which produces unreliable results, and can also inhibit learning over a longer period of time). It also reduces the possibility of no result at all through illness, physical accident, etc., and may avoid the backwash of examinations which in practice has usually proved restrictive, and harmful both for content and technique.

(Examinations can, however, also be designed to have a beneficial backwash, and in that sense may lead to curricular innovation, e.g. stress on oral skills in language examinations.)

*Disadvantages*

Continuous assessment has certain disadvantages. The demands on the teacher are much greater. He must have more initiative in clarifying his objectives, greater objectivity in his assessment, greater diligence and care in his record keeping. He will also spend more time moderating the work of colleagues. Malpractice (copying and plagiarism) is easier to get away with. Against this some form of sporadic testing, or in the case of a long essay or project, a *viva*, may be the only defence. Improvement/progress by students is not always adequately rewarded. Differential assessment can mitigate this (i.e. work early in the course could count for a lower proportion of the total assessment).

There are other potential disadvantages which I have not experienced in practice. The teacher/student relationship may be adversely affected by the

former's perpetual role as assessor being emphasised. Partly because of this the student may be under psychological strain throughout the course. Because the student dare not risk a low mark and thereby 'lower his average', learning may become *less* ambitious and more convergent.

Such an analysis of continuous assessment suggests that we can reasonably think of assessment as falling within the competence of the teacher, but supplemented or complemented by external moderation and examinations where necessary, although often we start from the opposite end. It is certainly clear that most of the deficiencies of both methods of assessment can be overcome by appropriate combination—the proportions must clearly vary at least according to the level, the subject being learned and the objectives of the course.

In assessing languages, it is an interesting exercise to start from the assumption of *no* examinations, and then to make a case for each one proposed —e.g. if it is an objective of the course that a child should be able by the end to ask his way in French in Paris and understand the reply, then a certain type of final oral test is justified, and so on.

### *Present use of continuous assessment*

So far in this country there is relatively little general experience of continuous assessment, and even less of its application to languages.

(1) *By CSE boards*

From the outset the GCE type examination was to be critically re-appraised and other possibilities encouraged:

> 'The main purpose of any system of examinations is to serve as an instrument to measure ability and achievement. If, however, the examinations consist solely of unseen papers and practical tests set at a specific moment of time, they measure one aspect only of total performance and they do so to the disadvantage of candidates who, though able, are bad examinees or who were, by reason of sickness, recent entry to the district or some other cause beyond their control, at a disadvantage at the time they sat for the examination.
>
> An assessment of ability and achievement over the whole duration of the course leading up to the examination would, if taken in conjunction with the results of the examination itself, not only do greater justice to many candidates, but would also enable other qualities to be measured such as the imagination, initiative and perseverance necessary for the planning and completion of a project requiring some investigation or minor research. It was therefore decided that an assessment of some aspect of course work would be permitted and indeed encouraged in the CSE system.' (*Joint West Midlands Examinations Board Regulations 1969*, p.1.)

Under Mode I (as well as under Mode III), there is wide use of various types and degrees of CA (with variation between board and board, subject and subject). With two boards the teacher's assessment is taken into account only for upgrading a candidate who has done unexpectedly badly in the examination. In *languages* CA is much less common. Information from twelve of the fourteen boards reveals that in only two and a half (half being the North section of the East Anglian board) is a definite proportion of the marks given for course work. In two others project work may be used for upgrading.

(2) *In colleges of education*

The longest experience of CA is probably in the colleges of the Bristol School of Education, but many other colleges now use course work in making the final assessment. There is a wide variety of practice. In Berkshire College of Education, out of sixteen subject areas five have no examinations at all, one has no *written* examination; the majority have a combination of course work and examinations, but not all in the same proportions. The languages (French and German) have 60 per cent course work and 40 per cent examination, but fourth year B.Ed. studies are assessed only by examination.

### *Future use*

The use of CA seems likely to go on increasing especially in the assessment of languages. If examinations can be accepted as complementary to CA, debate might be directed towards, for example, an identification of the specific objectives of courses at various levels and the isolation of those objectives which can be assessed only by end of course examination. In discussion of particular problems such as the assessment of oral contribution and skills, the place of diagnostic testing will no doubt emerge.

CHAPTER 8

# *Examinations in English as a foreign language*

G. E. PERREN

Clearly, examining English as a foreign language is big business, and one which has been going on for a long time[1]. Since in the world at large English is the most widely taught foreign language, it is not surprising that the range of examining techniques employed is very large indeed—from the highly sophisticated to the very naïve. In this particular context, the examining of English is fundamentally different from the examining of other languages, for we are considering our own language as learned by foreigners and not foreign languages as learned by English speakers. Moreover, in this case the examiners themselves are native speakers, operating as it were from a home base, and not as in the case of most foreign language examiners in Britain, foreign speakers of the language concerned.

Home-based examinations in English as a foreign language, then, are not necessarily linked to a particular educational system and its associated values, are applicable primarily to those who want to take them as evidence of their ability to *use* English, and to some extent are competitive with each other. It follows that they are likely to be far more linguistically based than educationally based; the examiners are certainly not experts in the educational background of all those foreigners who sit for their examinations, but they do claim to be experts in the language—if only because it is their own mother tongue.

We all think we know a lot about our own language, and indeed we do—although not always explicitly in those terms in which it needs to be presented to foreigners. English too has been the subject of a great deal of advanced linguistic research[2]. As the linguists will tell us, it is no easy matter

[1] *See* Note, p. 64

[2] It should be noted that a number of British universities offer advanced postgraduate courses for teachers of English as a foreign language, often with a high content of theoretical and applied linguistics. There is almost nothing comparable for the teacher of other foreign languages

to test English as a foreign language, simply because we now know so much about English. The matter is made more complex because English is mostly taught abroad by foreigners who, if often deplorably ignorant about the language, nevertheless seem to be quite clear about what they want to teach, which is not always the same as we would like to test. We can imagine a similar situation if the French taught in Britain by British teachers were examined by Frenchmen living in France. If so, no doubt we should be critical, but we should also be at a linguistic disadvantage in making some of our criticisms.

In this situation there arise overtones of national responsibility not associated with examining foreign languages in Britain. The English language abroad is often known (and probably judged) by examinations which are set in Britain, certainly as far as adult learners are concerned. Thus British examining authorities which set papers in English feel that they are, as it were, authenticating the language, and perhaps the culture, of their own country to foreigners. British-based examinations of English as a foreign language are inevitably seen as a projection of Britain abroad. The foreign candidate expects his meed of British 'civilisation' in such examinations—exported direct from Britain—and the British are often very ambivalent about providing it. At any rate the British argue a great deal among themselves about the nature, consistency and appropriate evidences of British civilisation which should be exhibited abroad in their examinations.

Thus the choosers of set books for literature papers are often in a fix. Quick to recognise (as liberal and progressive academics should) that Britain has developed a new relationship with the rest of the world since 1945, noting her less dominant and rather more convivial role, they guiltily realise that much of that very English literature which foreigners appear to like reading most is riddled with imperialism, xenophobia, racialism or culpable self-confidence in the superiority of Britain. (When selecting French, German or Spanish texts, the British examiner has no such moral problems.) The conflict between the claims of the classics and of a modest presentation of the contemporary scene can be quite agonising.

Examinations in English as a foreign language have a long history. The Cambridge Proficiency Examination was first established in 1913, and the Cambridge Lower Certificate in 1939, both examinations being designed primarily for non-English speakers in Europe. The examinations set by the RSA in English as a foreign language were originally developed to meet the needs of foreign students living in Britain, although now they are extensively taken overseas, and are set at three levels. Examinations in English as a foreign language are also administered by the Pitman Examinations Institute and the

LCC. The latter body attempts to provide papers which are concerned especially with English used for commerce. All these examinations include tests of spoken English as well as tests of reading and writing. The oral tests vary in their sophistication and power.

There is, however, an even longer history of examinations in English which have been taken by non-English speakers in colonial and ex-colonial territories outside Europe. Most of these examinations, as far as their English language papers are concerned, have been almost unmodified versions of examinations originally set for pupils in British schools. Thus they were designed less to test English as a foreign language, than to assess those skills considered appropriate to native speakers of English. They have therefore had a strong literary bias and a language content which for a foreign learner can only be regarded as curious. Until quite recently they included no oral test. The first overseas candidates for the London University Matriculation English papers sat (in Mauritius) in 1865, while the Cambridge Local Examinations were first taken in the Straits Settlements in 1891 and in Lagos in 1910. Since then the Cambridge board's Overseas School Certificate, its GCE and its many local derivatives have largely moulded the style and manner of English teaching in schools in great areas of Africa and Asia, with the general agreement and co-operation of the local teachers. It is sometimes claimed that in countries where English is used as a medium of school instruction (although it must first be learned as a foreign language), it thereby changes its status from a foreign to a second language and should be examined by rather different methods than those appropriate in, say, France or Germany. This may be true, but the difference should perhaps lie rather in varying the cultural content or context than in modifying the linguistic criteria or techniques of examining employed. Quite apart from the influence that these examinations have had on the teaching of English in schools, more recently certain GCE 'O' level English papers have been taken by very large numbers of private candidates overseas. (In January 1969 for example, about 35,000 candidates sat for the London University GCE 'O' level English paper.) Examinations made in England have an obviously high status overseas, supported to some extent by their value as a qualification for overseas students who wish to enter British universities or technical colleges for further training.

Two recent developments deserve special notice. Three years ago the RSA established its certificate in the teaching of English as a foreign language, primarily designed for foreign teachers of English. In this examination, papers are set on the methodology and content of English teaching, but candidates who cannot produce external evidence of a previous good command of English may

have to take a preliminary paper in the language. More recently Trinity College of Music has also established a Teacher's Licentiate Diploma in English as a second language which includes a test of oral English as well as one of teaching methodology. In view of the importance of oral tests, those recently introduced by TCM are of special interest. These new examinations in spoken English as a second language can be taken in twelve grades, ranging from a level appropriate to very young children to one suitable for adults. It is intended that the different grades can be taken at yearly intervals, thus covering up to twelve years of learning English. The examinations are supported by detailed syllabuses for each grade which provide far more guidance than is normally the case in any language examination. There is nothing parallel to these Trinity College examinations generally available to students of other foreign languages in Britain.

A common criticism of most language examinations is that their syllabuses are inexplicit, unrealistic or non-existent. While this applies to many examinations of English as a foreign language, it certainly does not apply to all. Partly no doubt because many of these examinations are set in Britain, to be taken in many different countries, and because candidates are prepared by many different kinds of teacher, many of whom are themselves foreigners, English syllabuses tend to be more explicit than those provided in other foreign languages. But because the techniques of testing used have to be acceptable to the same wide variety of teachers and candidates, they tend to be conservative. 'Face' validity of question and content rates high in such circumstances, but face validity is not always a good guide to the construction of good examinations or good tests in languages.

A number of examinations in English have developed and now employ objective and semi-objective techniques. These have been used quite extensively in the Cambridge Proficiency Examination (in the Use of English paper), by the LCC and by others.

One special aspect of English testing (as distinct from public 'examining'), deserves a brief note. In both Britain and the United States very large numbers of overseas students seek entry to institutions of higher education, and special English tests of proficiency are needed, which can be taken in overseas countries. This has given rise to valuable research on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly into the problems of testing advanced proficiency in the use of a language. Some of the techniques evolved to test students' practical ability to use English for purposes of learning vocational subjects might well be of interest to examiners of other foreign languages at other levels.

Nothing has been said about the many English examinations which are set and administered in countries throughout the world by foreign authorities. There are of course a great number of these simply because English is the most widely taught foreign language in school and out. Advanced techniques of examining are often used and some deserve careful study; more international interchange in this field would be beneficial, not least to British examining bodies.

## NOTE

*Entries for some examinations in English as a foreign language*

| | | | | *Totals* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Cambridge Examinations in English* | | | |
| | *Certificate of Proficiency* | | *Lower Certificate* | |
| 1968 | 14,371 | | 37,481 | 51,852 |
| | *Royal Society of Arts, English for foreigners* | | | |
| | *Stage 1* | *Stage 2* | *Stage 3* | |
| 1968/9 | 4,000 | 3,804 | 1,030 | 8,834 |
| | *Trinity College of Music, Spoken English* | | | |
| 1969 | Grades 1–12 | | | 1,846 |

CHAPTER 9

# *Summary of discussions*

The papers presented obviously introduced issues beyond the problems of setting, marking or administering examinations, more particularly that of the effect of examinations on teaching aims and techniques. One of the traditionally accepted roles of school examinations in Britain has been to provide general control over the curriculum, and indeed over the content of the courses taught in secondary schools. In some subjects the examination syllabus *is* the school scheme of work for the one or two years preceding the examination. In others an interpretation of the expressed examination requirements is worked out in detail by the teachers and the schools. There are established objections to both approaches. A rigidly controlled and detailed examination syllabus, designed and imposed as it were by a central body, is regarded as a straightjacket by some; while a loose description of general aims is regarded as too vague to secure efficient teaching by others. To whichever side we incline, it is quite clear that since examinations are measuring instruments, they cannot be efficient (or efficiently prepared for) unless we have a clear notion of what they are measuring. Whether provided by examining boards or by schools, detailed teaching aims and objectives are essential.

In recent years the materials and techniques used for foreign language teaching have radically changed. This has not resulted from changes in examination requirements but from new fashions, attitudes and insights into language learning. The shift of emphasis in classrooms from learning *about* languages and their associated literature, to learning to *use* languages has led to a general desire for greater precision in describing exactly what pupils are expected to be able to do at the end of courses, but so far GCE boards have been cautious in committing themselves to such descriptions.

## *GCE 'O' level*

The traditional imprecision of examination syllabuses probably exerts a conservative influence not only on the techniques of examining but on the methods of teaching employed in schools. Because no detailed statement is pro-

vided of exactly what candidates are expected to have learned, teachers diligently search past papers not only for indications of the standard of performance required but for likely questions which can be anticipated in their teaching. Departures from traditional methods of teaching or from established course-books may indeed appear prejudicial to good examination results. A closer definition both of general aims and of teaching objectives to be realised in the classroom might well encourage greater freedom of teaching techniques, albeit within defined limits. Specifications of what should be expected of pupils at different ages and stages would also be helpful.

Vocabulary as a measure of what should be known by candidates has, when used by itself, severe limitations. 'Knowing words' does not equate with knowing a language. But in view of current uncertainty about the range of vocabulary which may be expected in examination papers, some guidance by examining boards would be valuable. (In French, *le français fondamental*—supported by additional lists—might be a useful guide.) Apart from some description of the linguistic content in the syllabus, a statement of the level of skill required would be helpful, particularly if comprehension of speech is to be tested. Teachers would find it useful too, to know the importance of accuracy in pronunciation (what tolerances are permissible?), in spelling and in grammatical correctness in relation to the over-all proficiency required. Some skills of clear value, for example that of rapid silent reading for information, might be encouraged by providing appropriate tests. At present some techniques used for testing comprehension of written language actively discourage the development of high reading speed by emphasising the close study of individual words at the expense of the co-ordination of contextual information.

Greater flexibility of teaching, permitting a choice of materials to suit the varied interests of teachers and pupils, might be encouraged by requiring only limited compulsory studies, and offering a wide choice from a number of optional units covering different ranges of language or centres of interest. This would require a greater variety of published teaching texts, and no doubt publishers would require, before marketing them, some assurance of quick and numerous sales.

### *GCE 'A' level*

It seems clear that present 'A' level syllabuses (in some respects much more closely defined than those at 'O' level) are too narrow in their scope to ensure work of equal interest to all those who may take sixth form courses. (Some sixth forms require only one year courses beyond 'O' level.) Again it

might be valuable to limit the compulsory elements, and to provide a variety of alternatives to the conventional literature requirements. Papers in 'civilisation' at present tend to be unattractive, but papers which emphasise contemporary interests, some technical, might well be popular. They would need syllabuses which define their linguistic range as well as their content.

Schools undoubtedly tend to stick to the known—the literature course —because of the widely assumed value of classical texts and their established teachability. But to guarantee safety in passing examinations, crude simplifications of sophisticated literary values may have to be presented in classrooms. Literature should certainly remain as one of the options, and the prose—so often attacked—also has considerable value as an option. It is, however, doubtful whether formal translation into English should remain at all; an English summary of a text in a foreign language would be more widely acceptable and could well encourage wider, faster and even more intelligent reading. If a literature paper is taken as an option then to require at least one essay in the foreign language on a text which has been studied in detail seems appropriate. Wide and rapid reading should be encouraged, although literary classics are not necessarily the best material on which to develop this skill.

### *CSE Mode III*

There are obvious difficulties in ensuring that Mode III papers are comparable in standard to those set in Modes I and II. Different boards have devised different methods to keep them in line. In this field the experience of the Schools Council Modern Languages Project in establishing a common paper acceptable to several boards, to be scored according to agreed principles, seems very relevant, especially in connection with techniques of testing listening and reading comprehension.

Mode III permits teachers to decide their own teaching objectives and the relative weighting to be given to various skills; an examination syllabus as distinct from a school scheme of work is, in these circumstances, inappropriate. But if the schemes of different schools appear to require different levels of achievement, moderation may be needed; if the scheme of an individual school implies a lower level of achievement than is required by Modes I and II, a board may indicate that candidates taking this Mode III are unlikely to be able to achieve a grade I pass.

If equality of standard with GCE 'O' level or with Modes I and II is sought, schools offering Mode III may be tempted to concentrate on examining

written skills, which would destroy some of the advantages of using Mode III. The comparatively small number of candidates taking Mode III (about 10 per cent of the total) indicates that its opportunities are not yet being fully exploited; in some areas it is not offered at all. Some teachers are still reluctant to employ newer techniques for testing, e.g. a tape recorder for assessing oral/auditory skills.

### *Non-school examinations*

Like those of CSE Mode III, the language examinations of the Ordinary and Higher National Diplomas (Business Studies) are internally set and subject to external approval and scoring, but there are the following differences:

(i) The joint committee provides a model syllabus, which is accepted by most colleges.
(ii) A pass in the oral test is obligatory.
(iii) Previous course work is assessed.

Equivalent levels of achievement in different colleges could be encouraged through more contact between colleges and by circulating copies of papers set or of recorded versions of oral tests. Comparative statistics of results could also be published.

In non-school examinations oral tests are emphasised and these often require a high level of fluency and expression. Because of the varied vocational interests involved, however, it is not always easy to find oral examiners who possess the necessary combination of high fluency and a knowledge of the technical terms likely to be required to discuss the particular interests of candidates. Although using a language laboratory to present questions and record candidates' answers may appear to help, it must be remembered that scoring a taped oral test is slow and expensive. If live examiners are used, recording facilitates external moderation by permitting sample re-scoring.

### *Oral examining*

Examinations of oral ability require a syllabus no less than examinations of reading or writing skills—it is quite insufficient to provide a vague statement of aspirations or merely to indicate certain social situations within which candidates should be prepared to talk. Standards of performance required could be clarified by making and circulating recordings of model oral tests, together with an analysis of how such examples are scored. It is felt that the one hundred prepared questions, the listing of twenty to thirty topics for preparation and

study, or the use of project work as a basis for oral testing could all be helpful in defining in practical terms not only objectives but the standards of oral skills required.

In terms of the time, travelling and subsistence expenses of external examiners (not to mention the loss of teaching time involved in some institutions) traditional methods of conducting oral tests are expensive. The return for this expenditure is at present very limited. When the examiner himself participates in exchanges of speech at the same time as he is attempting to score the responses, tests can be particularly unreliable or become virtually non-discriminatory. The reliability of scoring varies greatly according to the nature of the test materials, the qualities which are selected for scoring, the extent to which over-all performance is notionally sub-divided into sub-skills and the weighting given to them in scoring. Such weighting should not necessarily be the same at all levels of proficiency, or in all languages. (Tolerances of pronunciation may be wider in, say, German than in French, and in English perhaps widest of all.) Unstructured tests of 'conversation', requiring a series of marks based on the assessment by one examiner of several supposedly discrete skills, simultaneously employed, can only become more unreliable as greater discrimination is attempted. An 'impression' mark on a simple pass-fail scale may be much more reliable, but this only raises new problems of validity. When results have to be graded, as in CSE, it is difficult to ensure both good reliability and adequate discrimination.

Proposals to increase the over-all weight given to oral performance in GCE examinations could, unless the tests used were much more effective than at present, lead to those pupils seeking university entrance being placed at greater risk. The present low correlation between results in oral and written tests suggests that it is wiser to submit scores for them independently rather than to combine them.

### *Research by examining boards*

The care taken by examining boards to ensure comparability of standards in GCE papers, and similarity in standards between Modes I, II and III in CSE papers, is welcomed. But the details of such work are not widely known outside those immediately professionally involved. An air of Olympian mystery is attributed to the deliberations of boards by many teachers, parents, and candidates, which could perhaps be dispersed by freer information. It is realised that reports of all their detailed work might not be suitable for wide publication; but even if marks are confidential, the processes of arriving at them need

not be. It is believed that teachers would benefit from more information and that teachers in training should be taught not only the principles of language testing but more about the administration and control of public examinations. This would improve confidence in results and lead to better participation by teachers in developing new techniques.

### *Objective tests*

The use of objective tests of achievement requires the exact definition of aims and a precise analysis of the content of the course of instruction to be tested. It is clear that objective tests can offer great economy in administration and scoring costs. But their use also helps considerably in the task of clarifying objectives and establishing the relative value of the multiple skills which contribute to language proficiency. Apart from their use in making comparative assessments of performance, they can be of great value as a research tool to tell us more about language and language teaching. At present objective techniques are ostensibly most suitable for assessing the receptive skills of comprehension, but are less manageable in measuring the production of speech and writing. But just as an unstructured conversational test of speech can be wildly unreliable, so the essay-type test of writing skills can be unreliable, uneconomical and inefficient. The backwash effect or non-creative quality of objective techniques is often criticised, but controlled methods of eliciting written responses can sometimes be scored semi-objectively, e.g. by requiring written responses to pictures used as stimuli, the completion of a narrative sequence or the composition of structured letters. It is also perfectly reasonable to provide a detailed examination syllabus and to employ objective tests to assess whether it has been properly covered.

The proposal for an item bank of pre-tested materials, available to examining boards, is not new and remains attractive; although in our present state of imprecision about syllabuses, it might have to be associated with a bank of aims and objectives.

### *Continuous assessment*

If misunderstood, the notion of continuous assessment can easily encourage continual testing, which has obvious disadvantages. Long term studies of the reliability of continuous assessment as compared with that of conventional periodic testing or examinations are required, as well as clarification of its effect on student motivation and on student-teacher relationships. In

schools, the status of the public examination is such that it could not suddenly be replaced, bearing in mind the attitudes of parents and employers. If continuous assessment is used in schools, problems arising from changes of school or changes of teacher have to be adequately dealt with.

In universities, where continuous assessment has in the past been used little in undergraduate work but much more in graduate work, there are signs of a change round. The newer universities rely more on assessments of undergraduate course work, while at the second degree level examinations are becoming more common.

Responsibility for assessment should as far as possible be spread between teachers, not only to increase reliability but to increase student confidence in the ratings given. Clearly, too, students must know these ratings, if not continuously then at periodic intervals.

The ranking or assessment of candidates given to examining boards by teachers is a form of continuous assessment, which appears to favour pupils in comparison with their later examination results. While the role of continuous assessment in the obviously practical subjects (such as arts and crafts) is clear because of the nature of the tasks learned, its true value in relation to foreign language courses awaits the careful listing of objectives and the ordering and weighting of the skills involved. The more foreign language achievement is understood in terms of skills rather than knowledge, the more appropriate continuous assessment becomes.

### *English as a foreign language*

Examinations set and administered from Britain and taken by candidates from many countries both at home and abroad are subject to multiple feed-back. A very large proportion of candidates for the Cambridge and RSA examinations in English take them in Britain. The papers set must therefore satisfy both foreign and British teachers of English, of widely differing standards of competence both in English and in teaching skill. The variety of demand for and provision of English has led to interesting and practical developments in the techniques of language examining. These are not always well enough known to those concerned with other languages. It is felt that from the points of view both of examining and of teaching techniques there could well be a greater interchange of information between teachers of English as a second language and teachers of other foreign languages.

APPENDIX 1

# *Current research*

The following extracts from CILT Research Register describe research in progress in Great Britain.

*727* Mrs C. Burstall, National Foundation for Educational Research, 79 Wimpole Street, London W1. *Associates:* 2 research assistants, 2 technical assistants. *Sponsor:* Department of Education and Science.

*The French project:* an investigation into the teaching of French in primary schools. The project will present an independent evaluation of the pilot scheme for the teaching of French in selected primary schools. A longitudinal study is being carried out of 2 consecutive year-groups of pupils (about 12,000 children). Suitable control groups have been set up. Tests of proficiency in French (listening, speaking, reading and writing) have been constructed by the project staff. The experimental sample will be followed through until the end of their second year in the secondary school. Attitude scales, proficiency tests, questionnaires etc. will be constructed as required. The study is being continued with a third year-group (*see* no. 902). *Date begun:* May 1964. *Progress reported:* in *French from eight: a national experiment* (first report) by Clare Burstall (*see* Appendix 2); next report to be published about September 1970.

*764* C. V. Russell, University of London Institute of Education, Malet Street, London WC1.

*A comparative study of examination techniques in modern languages in the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom.* (The researcher attended as an observer the conduct of the Abitur examination (oral section) in eight schools in Rheinland-Westfalen during May 1969.) For degree of MA. *Date begun:* July 1967.

*835* E. F. Chaplen, 27 Birch Hall Lane, Manchester M13 0XJ. (Research at: Faculty of Education, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL.) *Sponsor:* Social Science Research Council.

*Construction, validation and use of an English proficiency test battery.*

(1) Construction and validation of the battery, for non-native speakers of English who intend to pursue diploma or degree studies in British universities.

(2) Use of the battery to determine what proportion of undergraduates and of postgraduates from overseas are probably under-achieving as a result of lack of proficiency in English. Test battery has been administered to overseas students at universities and assessments of English proficiency have been obtained from tutors, in order to estimate the proportion of students who would benefit from remedial English courses. For degree of PhD. *Date begun:* October 1967.

*902* Mrs C. Burstall, National Foundation for Educational Research, 79 Wimpole Street, London W1. *Associates:* 1 research assistant, 1 technical assistant. *Sponsor:* Schools Council.

*The third cohort study.* An extension of the evaluation of the teaching of French in primary schools (*see* no. 727). The main aims are : to carry out a longitudinal study of a third year-group of 8-year-old beginners in French; to investigate further the teaching of French in small rural schools; to study in detail the factors determining less able pupils' success or failure in learning French; to investigate at the primary level promising lines of enquiry developed during the evaluation of the secondary stage of the pilot scheme. *Date begun* : April 1968.

*903* P. Dyson, De La Salle College of Education, Middleton, Manchester. *Sponsor:* Modern Language Association.

*Oral testing in French* (Modern Language Association research project). (1) A comparison of analytical and impression marking systems for oral assessment. (2) A comparison of different testing techniques for conversation ('free' conversation as opposed to 'guided' conversation). (3) Can pronunciation and intonation be assessed along with reading? *Date begun:* October 1969.

*908* Dr W. D. Halls, Department of Educational Studies, University of Oxford, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford. *Sponsors:* Council of Europe, Gulbenkian Foundation.

*Oxford/Council of Europe study for the evaluation of the curriculum and examinations:* sub-project : modern languages at the upper academic secondary level : a comparison of the curriculum and examinations in the member states of the Council of Europe. This entails the study of official documents relating to aims, syllabus, curriculum and examinations; survey questionnaire; field work and personal interviews. *Date begun:* November 1968. *Progress reported:* in report by W. D. Halls (*see* Appendix 2).

*909* W. Prescott, University of York, Micklegate House, Micklegate, York YO1 1JZ. (Schools Council Modern Languages Project : Evaluation Section.) *Associates:* A. Crispin, B. Park, U. Sankarayya, J. Simpson. *Sponsor:* Schools Council.

*Research on tests and testing and examinations.* (1) Production of achievement tests in French, German, Russian and Spanish for pupils aged 11-16 and (in French) 8-16 who are following the Nuffield/Schools Council materials in these languages. (2) Development of experimental 'O' level examinations in modern languages. (3) On-going research and testing during production of materials. The tests produced will be published by the publishers of the Nuffield/Schools Council course materials. Details of the examinations are already available. *Date begun:* 1968.

*910* Welsh Joint Education Committee, 30 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, Glamorgan.

*Research to establish an interim model of standard spoken Welsh* to form the basis of all aspects of Welsh language teaching in schools, especially the teaching of Welsh as a second language. The work is being carried out by a panel comprising language specialists and teachers. *Date begun:* February 1965. *Progress reported: Cymraeg Byw: Rhifyn II* published June 1967 by the WJEC.

*911* Welsh Joint Education Committee, 30 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, Glamorgan.

*Compilation of a list of the basic sentence structures and vocabulary of Welsh.* Examples of the structures listed will be provided; the list is intended to cover the structures and vocabulary to be known by students of Welsh as a second language who are candidates for examinations in Welsh (GCE 'O' level and CSE). *Date begun:* February 1965. *Progress reported: Cymraeg Byw: Rhifyn 11* published June 1967 by the WJEC.

*914* T. A. Carter, Language Centre, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton SO9 5NH. *Associates:* Mrs J. Russ, Miss A. Leyland, Dr K. Zobel (University of Southampton); M. Taylor (Bell School of Languages, Cambridge). *Sponsor:* Office du Baccalauréat International, Geneva.

*Research on multiple-choice and other objective tests of language acquisition at university entrance level.* Preparation of tests, item and battery analyses of validity, reliability and backwash effect on teaching. Correlations with national examinations in several European countries. *Date begun:* January 1967.

*915* T. S. Percival, Department of Education, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL. *Sponsor:* Schools Council.

*Construction of a standardised battery of French tests.* Tests of listening, reading, writing and speaking are envisaged, for use below CSE/GCE level. A preliminary study was carried out, comprising development and standardisation of a listening test (details of this study are on file at CILT); the present work will be carried out on similar lines. *Date begun:* 1970.

APPENDIX 2

# *Select bibliography*

This short list of books and articles relevant to the topic of the conference includes publications referred to in the text of the report, but not fully described there.


Burstall, Clare : *French from eight: a national experiment.* National Foundation for Educational Research, Slough, 1968. (Occasional Publication Series 18.)

Centre for Information on Language Teaching : *Foreign language testing.* 3rd edn. CILT, 1969. (Specialised Bibliography 1.)

Christopher, R. : *JMB/GCE: the work of the Joint Matriculation Board.* Joint Matriculation Board, Manchester, 1969. (OP 29.)

Connaughton, I. M. : 'The validity of examinations at 16-plus'. *Educational Research,* vol. 11 no. 3, 1969, pp. 163–78.

Davies, Alan, editor: *Language testing symposium: a psycholinguistic approach.* Oxford University Press, 1968. (Language and Language Learning 21.)

Department of Education and Science : *The Certificate of Secondary Education.* DES, 1968. (Reports on Education 47.)

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Grey, D. : 'A CSE examination in German'. *Modern Languages,* vol. 47 no. 3, 1966, pp. 104–7.

Halis, W. D. : *Report on modern languages at the upper academic secondary level.* Oxford University Department of Education, 1969. (Oxford/ Council of Europe Study for the Evaluation of the Curriculum and Examinations.) (Mimeographed.)

Hitchman, P. J. : *Examining oral English in schools.* Methuen, 1966.

Joint Matriculation Board : *O-level Latin, French and biology: an enquiry conducted by the University of London School Examinations Council and the Joint Matriculation Board into examination standards.* The Board, Manchester, 1966. (OP 24.)

Leng, A. I. : 'An alternative French 'O' level examination'. *Modern Languages,* vol. 48 no. 3, 1967, pp. 105–8.

Lindley, D. V.: 'An experiment in the marking of an examination'. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society,* series A, vol. 124 pt. 3, 1961, pp. 285–313.

Macintosh, H. G.: *Objective testing.* Associated Examining Board, Aldershot, 1968.

Mather, D. R., N. France and G. T. Sare: *The Certificate of Secondary Education:a handbook for moderators.* Collins, 1965.

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Otter, H. S.: *A functional language examination: the Modern Language Association examinations project.* Oxford University Press, 1968. (Language and Language Learning 19.)

Peterson, A. D. C.: 'International exam.' *Times Educational Supplement,* no. 2702, March 3 1967, p. 735.

*Proposals for the curriculum and examinations in the sixth form: a joint statement* . . . Standing Conference on University Entrance and Schools Council Joint Working Party on Sixth Form Curriculum and Examinations . . . (December 1969).

Schools Council: Examinations Bulletins:

5. *The Certificate of Secondary Education: school-based examinations: examining, assessing and moderating by teachers.* HMSO, 1965.
11. *The Certificate of Secondary Education: trial examinations—oral English.* HMSO, 1966.
12. *Multiple marking of English compositions: an account of an experiment;* by J. N. Britton, N. C. Martin, H. Rosen. HMSO, 1966.
20. *CSE: a group study approach to research and development;* edited by W. G. A. Rudd. To be published by Evans/Methuen Educational for Schools Council, October 1970.

Schools Council: *Examining at 16+: the report of the joint GCE/CSE Committee of the Schools Council.* HMSO, 1966.

Schools Council: Working Papers:

5. *Sixth form curriculum and examinations.* HMSO, 1966.
6. *The 1965 CSE monitoring experiment.* Pts. 1–2. HMSO, 1966.
19. *Development of modern language teaching in secondary schools.* HMSO, 1969.
20. *Sixth form examining methods.* HMSO, 1968.
21. *The 1966 CSE monitoring experiment.* HMSO, 1969.
28. *New patterns in sixth form modern language studies.* To be published by Evans/Methuen Educational, October 1970.

Scottish Education Department: *Scottish educational statistics 1966–.* Annual, HMSO, 1967–.

West Yorkshire and Lindsey Regional Examining Board : *CSE examinations 1970: assessment in a nutshell.* Rev. and reprinted. The Board, Sheffield, 1969.

West Yorkshire and Lindsey Regional Examining Board : *Conducting an agreement trial: a working manual.* Rev. and reprinted. The Board, Sheffield, 1968.

Whalley, G. E. : *The Certificate of Secondary Education: an account of the CSE examination, its organisation and methods.* University of Leeds Institute of Education, Leeds, 1969.

Whitfield, Richard C. : 'Improving examining at sixteen plus'. *Educational Research,* vol. 10 no. 2, 1968, pp. 109–13.

Wilkinson, Andrew : *Spoken English.* 2nd impression, revised. University of Birmingham, Birmingham, 1966. (Educational Review Occasional Publications 2.)

APPENDIX 3

# *Members of conference*

J. B. Adam, *City of Westminster College*
R. O. Anderson, *Publishers' Association*
T. A. Carter, *Joint Council of Language Associations*
E. F. Chaplen, *University of Manchester*
R. H. Coffyn, *Royal Society of Arts*
G. B. Crowder, *Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese*
D. J. Devereux, *Association of Teachers of Italian*
A. P. Dyson, *De La Salle College of Education, Middleton*
E. R. Ellard, *Modern Language Association*
J. R. French, *Portsmouth Polytechnic*
J. F. Galleymore, *Committee on Research and Development in Modern Languages*
P. B. Healey, *Educational Research Board, Social Science Research Council*
E. Heberden, *Trinity College of Music*
P. H. Hoy, HMI, *Department of Education and Science*
Miss C. J. Hunter, *Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations*
E. H. Hutton, HMI, *Department of Education and Science*
D. King, *National Association of Language Advisers*
F. H. King, *Centre for Information on Language Teaching*
P. Lawrence, *Associated Lancashire Schools Examining Board*
Dr B. M. Lott, *British Council*
Miss H. N. Lunt, *Centre for Information on Language Teaching*
A. S. McKenzie, *Scottish Certificate of Education Examination Board*
D. F. Mann, *Standing Conference of Regional Examining Boards*
P. H. Meades, *Association of Teachers of Russian*
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H. S. Otter, *University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate*
B. W. Page, *Leeds Modern School*
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Miss M. A. L. Sculthorp, *University of Kent at Canterbury*

Dr D. Shoesmith, *Test Development Research Unit, Oxford, Cambridge and O & C Examinations Boards*
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D. Spencer, *British Council*
Professor A. Spicer, *University of Essex*
W. J. C. Stuart, *London Chamber of Commerce*
D. E. Tucker, *Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations*
Mrs A. Turner, *Oastler College, Huddersfield*
H. Walker, HMI, *Scottish Education Department*
D. W. T. Watson, *Association of Teachers of German*
F. M. Willis, *University of Bradford*
Dr S. Wiseman, *National Foundation for Educational Research*

*Conference Secretary:* Dr J. A. Corbett